

Episcopal Identity at Porter-Gaud

As an Episcopal School, Porter-Gaud is a Christian community that is upheld by the basic principles of the Baptismal Covenant.¹ This Covenant, as expressed in the Book of Common Prayer, is founded upon the belief that God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ as a triune community of love - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and that human beings, made in the divine image, are created for communion with this love. From this foundation, the Baptismal Covenant calls individuals and institutions to be incarnate instruments of God's love and grace. True to its Episcopal identity, Porter-Gaud thus seeks to be a community that celebrates and worships God as the center of life and loves our neighbors as ourselves, serving Christ in all persons, striving for justice and peace among all people, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

Worship

Worship is one of the most universal and effective expressions of Episcopal identity and community life. Services for all divisions are held weekly for faculty and students, and prayer is offered regularly, both at internal gatherings and public events. When we gather for worship, we immerse ourselves in the traditions, stories, and values that serve as the anchors of our community, seeking to center our hearts and minds around the love of God revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. These gatherings are sensitive to the diversity of religious identities represented within our school while remaining faithful to the Anglican tradition, particularly as articulated in the Book of Common Prayer.

Leadership

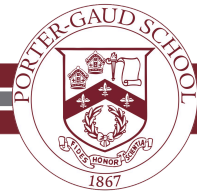
Directive of Episcopal identity comes from the Board of Trustees via the school's mission statement and bylaws and is implemented by the Head of School and the Office of the Chaplaincy. The school's governance structure calls for regular review and examination of the school's Episcopal identity by the Board of Trustees. This identity is also to be clearly articulated regularly to all members of the community, particularly at the beginning of each academic year, during the interview and/or orientation process for new board members, faculty, staff, and students, as well as throughout the admissions process for prospective families.

Community Engagement and Belonging

As an embodiment of the Christian faith, Porter-Gaud seeks to celebrate and worship God as the center of life and to honor the dignity of every human being as beloved persons made in the image of God. We affirm the sovereignty of God and seek to be a community where the immeasurable and irreplaceable worth of each person is recognized and unconditional love - a love that doesn't have to be earned - is offered to all. Our traditions and community life flow from this identity and aim to create an environment that welcomes and nurtures the unique capacity of every member of our community to reflect God's love, goodness, beauty, and creativity and to pursue lives of meaning, purpose, and service. In addition to the presence of our chaplains, one of the clearest expressions of this commitment is the Office of Community Engagement and Belonging, which is anchored by and is an extension of our Episcopal identity.²

¹ See Appendix A for the entirety of the Baptismal Covenant as expressed in the Book of Common Prayer.

² See Appendix B for an example of our Episcopal identity serving as the foundation for our Office of Community Engagement and Belonging.



Religious Diversity

Porter-Gaud stands on the foundation of orthodox Anglican theology rooted in the Christian scriptures and expressed in the Book of Common Prayer. This foundation has an integrity that enables us to be an inclusive community that loves and honors each of our members. The religious diversity of the school community does not create silos or ignore differences. Rather, it provides a magnificent opportunity to foster thoughtful dialogue, humility, empathy, understanding, and respect for the spiritual formation of individuals and families from a variety of faiths and backgrounds. Together, we seek to cultivate a community that embodies the love of God, a love that is unconditional and indiscriminate.

Academics

As an Episcopal school, Porter-Gaud participates in a tradition with a long and rich history of academic excellence, integrating faith and reason in a graceful and inclusive manner which has been the hallmark of Anglican education for centuries. Our academic curriculum is constructed and implemented in alignment with our Episcopal identity and combines rigorous and free intellectual inquiry with an unapologetic proclamation of faith in a sovereign and loving God. Consistent with our commitment to academic excellence and intellectual development, Porter-Gaud offers the study of religion in a manner that is meaningful, age-appropriate, and as fully rigorous as our other academic offerings. Though the content may overlap, a clear distinction is maintained between gatherings for worship, prayer, and discipleship and the study of religion in the classroom.

The WATCH Prayer

The WATCH Prayer is a natural outgrowth of the mission of the school, particularly with respect to our Episcopal identity. It is an articulation of (and prayerful supplication for) the principles and moral qualities we - as an Episcopal school - seek to develop in our students.

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.

This document drew from previous Episcopal Identity statements produced by Porter-Gaud School as well as the principles of good practice offered by the National Association of Episcopal Schools. It was prepared by the Head Chaplain, The Rev. Palmer B. Kennedy, and the Episcopal Identity Committee and was approved by the Porter-Gaud Board of Trustees on March 14, 2023.

APPENDIX A

The Baptismal Covenant (Book of Common Prayer, 304-305)

- Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Father?
People I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
- Celebrant* Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead
- Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
People I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
- Celebrant* Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?
People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
People I will, with God's help.

APPENDIX B

Community Engagement and Belonging Terminology

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Community engagement is the process of identifying and addressing issues affecting the well-being of all members of the community, as well as celebrating the joy of coming together as one. (Romans 12:3-5)

BELONGING:

Belonging is an outcome. It means different things to different people and implies the feeling of security, appreciation, support, fair treatment, and acceptance as a beloved member of the community. (Ephesians 2:13-22)

DIVERSITY:

The intentional development of school communities where people of different backgrounds, identities, and points of view come together as a body. Diversity is both a source of strength and a primary means of enhancing the intellectual, social, spiritual, and moral life of the school. (Rev. 7:9-10)

INCLUSION:

Beyond the sheer presence of a diverse group of people, inclusion is the process by which members of the community honor one another's inherent dignity, welcome many voices (especially those from underrepresented and historically marginalized communities), and work toward the ongoing broadening of the community's horizons. (Romans 15: 5-7)

EQUITY:

Equity is the condition where fairness and faithfulness thrive, and all members of the community are respected for their inherent dignity as human beings and capacity to contribute to the building up of the life of the school. Toward that end, we at Porter-Gaud intentionally seek to identify barriers to creating a more equitable community. (Psalm 33:5)

JUSTICE:

The courageous and continual attention to and advocacy on behalf of those most vulnerable in the community (Proverbs 31:8; Isaiah 1:17a)

DIGNITY:

Dignity speaks to the inherent and unconditional worth of all human beings and the primary lens through which we view each community member. (Gal. 3:28)

SOCIAL JUSTICE:

The integration of the ideals and concepts of equity, justice, and a fair society throughout the life of the school; the embracing and honoring of diversity; and the integral inclusion of community service and service-learning. (Isaiah 1:17; I Corinthians 12:26; Philippians 2:3-4)

This document was prepared by Reverend Palmer Kennedy, Porter-Gaud School Head Chaplain, and Dr. Yerko Sepúlveda, Director of Community Engagement and Belonging. The definitions for Community Engagement and Belonging were drafted by the aforementioned Porter-Gaud leaders. The definitions for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, Dignity, and Social Justice were adapted from NAES Statement on Inclusion and Episcopal Identity. The Porter-Gaud Board of Trustees adopted this terminology on January 10, 2023.