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'Justice was delivered'

Guilty verdict in Emanuel massacre a relief after 'heart-rending' trial



BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

John Pinckney (center), father of the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, is surrounded by the son of Ethel Lance, Gary Washington (from front left), State Sen. Gerald Malloy, and the Rev. Kylon Middleton on Thursday after leaving J. Waites Waring Federal Courthouse, where Dylann Roof was found guilty of all 33 federal charges in the Emanuel AME Church shooting.

BY JENNIFER BERRY HAWES
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pc Online
For more photos and a video, go to postandcourier.com/multimedia
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Last weekend, Jennifer Pinckney sat down her two young daughters individually, including the now-7-year-old who hid beneath a desk with her as a gunman executed their father on the other side of a thin wall.

The school librarian explained to each what had gone on the previous week. The man who reportedly killed her husband and their daddy, the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, was on trial. They didn't know yet what would happen.

But soon they would. Late Thursday, Pinckney drove home after a jury found Dylann Roof guilty of all 33 charges against him, including hate crimes and religious obstruction.

She prepared to speak with her girls again. This time, she could tell them that a jury had found the man who killed their father guilty. At the least, he would spend his life in prison.

"The first step is over," Pinckney said. "It gave us at least a little bit of closure before the holidays and before we get going again in January."

She hopes the penalty phase of Roof's trial, set to start Jan. 3, goes as quickly as the first.

"This has been a very tough time, a very emotional time for all of us," she said. "It all still seems unreal."

The Rev. Kylon Middleton had been best friends with Rev. Pinckney, Emanuel AME Church's senior pastor, since they were children. In Pinckney, he found a man of

deep thought and deep faith. And in the void of Pinckney's death, Middleton remains a key support for the pastor's widow and two little girls.

Middleton sat with Mrs. Pinckney in court during every day of testimony. He saw the horrific crime scene photos showing his old friend lying face-down and bleeding heavily, head toward the fellowship hall's altar.

But then came the verdicts — and relief from the unceasing anxiety that had built since the first days of Roof's trial when another high-profile case was wrapping up in a state courtroom next door.

Middleton had been following closely the trial of former North Charleston police officer Michael Slager, charged with murder in the shooting death of a black man, Walter Scott. The case against Slager, who is white, ended in a mistrial due to a hung jury, rekindling debate over issues of justice and race.

Roof's verdict, however, offered relief.

"We were able to exhale, at least little bit," Middleton said.

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MICHAEL PRONZATO/STAFF

The outside of Emanuel AME Church is decorated with wreaths, trees and garland on Thursday.

Death penalty phase next for killer fueled by hate, racism

BY GLENN SMITH, JENNIFER BERRY HAWES and ABIGAIL DARLINGTON
The Post and Courier

Dylann Roof, a gun-obsessed loner who tried to provoke a race war after soaking up online hate, faces a potential death sentence after a jury convicted him of 33 federal crimes Thursday stemming from the shooting of nine black parishioners at Charleston's Emanuel AME Church.

The jury with three black members and nine white members deliberated for two hours before finding the self-avowed white supremacist guilty of hate crimes, obstruction of religion, and firearms violations.

Roof stood facing forward, impassive, as the jury foreman delivered each verdict.

He then reaffirmed his plans to represent himself in the trial's upcoming penalty phase with his life on the line, a move the judge called "a bad decision."

The verdicts came nearly two years from the day Roof began scouting out Emanuel for his attack, making the 90-minute drive from his Eastover home to Charleston six times to prepare for the shooting rampage that took place during a weekly Bible study in June 2015.

Nearly 50 victims' family members and the adult survivors of the shooting packed into the courtroom.

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Scott invites Sessions to town

Does 'homework' on AG nominee

Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for U.S. attorney general, isn't making house calls on all his colleagues.

Just Sen. Tim Scott. The man Trump nominated to lead the U.S. Department of Justice quietly slipped into town under the radar Thursday, where Scott took him to meetings with criminal justice professionals, North Charleston City Council members and local ministers who quizzed Sessions on the Michael Slager case.

The Slager grilling was to be expected after Vice President-elect Mike Pence refused to say whether the Trump administration would pursue charges against the former North Charleston police officer who shot and killed motorist Walter Scott.



BRIAN HICKS

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What was Merrill paid for?

Groups, businesses offer few answers

BY ANDREW KNITTLE
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COLUMBIA — A day after state Rep. Jim Merrill was indicted on a lengthy list of ethics violations, questions remain about the heaps of cash he is accused of accepting.

The payments came from trade organizations, private businesses and even the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Most of them had little to say Thursday about what they were paying Merrill — an influential state lawmaker in one job and a tuned-in consultant in another — to do.

At least one said the fact the lawmaker they'd hired is now snared in a Statehouse ethics probe is reason enough for them to step away.

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Merrill

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Partly cloudy.
High 47. Low 43.
Complete 5-day forecast, **B10**

BridgeB9
BusinessB1
ClassifiedsD1
ComicsB8-9
CrosswordsB8, D8
Dear AbbyB7
EditorialsA14
LocalA2
MoviesB7
ObituariesB4
SportsC1
TelevisionB6



Resume Solutions
Professional resume edit and rewrite for \$29. See **A2**



Hurd



Jackson



Lance



Middleton-Doctor



Pinckney



Sanders



Simmons



Coleman Singleton



Thompson

'Justice delivered' in Emanuel massacre

EMANUEL, from A1

Many of the nearly 50 family members who packed the courtroom over six days of testimony, and others who filled overflow courtrooms, released similar pent-up breaths of waiting, of fear and worry. Now they can spend the holidays with loved ones and mourn those who died with less stress.

"Unfortunately, our loved ones will not be here to share in that holiday spirit," said state Sen. Gerald Malloy, a friend of Pinckney's who served in the Senate with him. "However, the government presented a sound case that helped reveal the facts to the public, and justice was delivered by a jury today."

The Rev. Sharon Risher also sat through the gut-wrenching days of testimony. She saw her mother's lifeless body. She saw all of the bodies. But she'd seen those before.

Hearing the pathologist's report devastated her most.

"Seeing those six bullets in my mom — right as I seen them, I felt those bullets in the same spot. My body had a jolt, and to realize the pain and destruction that happened in that church was nothing I could have ever imagined in my mind," said Risher, an AME minister who worked as a trauma chaplain in Dallas when the shooting occurred.

Yet, over the past almost 18 months since the massacre, Risher has found a support system, a silver lining of love in the devastation that struck each of the nine families. When she cried in court, someone passed her tissues. Another reached over a courtroom bench to grab her hand. And another held her tight during recesses.

"This has brought us together for life. We will be a group of people that have a bond that will not be broken," Risher said.

The guilty verdicts provided relief to the unrelenting grief over the loss of her mother, Ethel Lance, the church's 70-year-old sexton. From here, Risher said she can leave Roof's punishment in the hands of the judicial system.

"If he spends the rest of his life in jail, I pray those nine angels visit him every night," she said. "Maybe one day he'll call on the name of Jesus."

Once the penalty phase of Roof's trial begins, representatives from each family will testify about their loved ones, their lives and dreams, along with the enormous void their deaths have left behind. That's when jurors will decide if Roof should get life in prison or a death sentence.

At a press conference, survivor Felicia Sanders also said she had turned that phase of the trial over to the judicial system to handle.

"I'm not worried. I'll just trust it's in God's hands," said Sanders, whose son and elderly aunt were among the nine killed.

However, she disputed a defense notion that Roof had no friends, traveling alone to Charleston to stake out the church and take selfies of himself at Confederate sites. If Roof had just waited until the Bible study ended, everyone in the room would have spoken with him. They would have learned what he needed — and what they could do for him.

"He had 12 friends in that room, if he had only reached out," she said.

Kevin Singleton went to Roof's trial during one day of testimony. On a courtroom TV, he saw his mother, Myra Thompson, lying face down on the floor of a church where he attended Sunday school as a boy. He saw Pinckney and Sanders' son, Tywanza, sprawled in pools of blood.

Singleton didn't go back.

"The evidence is just so excruciating, so heart-rending," he said.

However, the verdict offered some relief heading into the holidays.

"It doesn't change anything. It's just closure. But it's no hooray moment," Singleton said.

The first time Singleton's stepfather, the Rev. Anthony Thompson, saw Roof was at the bond hearing barely 48 hours after his wife lay dead. Thompson told the killer that his family forgave him. But he also warned the young man to repent.

Seeing Roof yet again show no emotion in court wasn't the hardest part of the past week; the toughest moments of the trial came during testimony from Polly Sheppard, a close and longtime friend of Myra's. Sheppard recalled that after Roof sprayed the church's fellowship hall with bullets, she could hear Myra say, "Lord, have mercy."

Thompson didn't know his wife had said that, likely her final words. Then to hear Sheppard's desperate 911 call, it all became too much. The tears came as he listened, thick and grieving ones for all that so many of them had lost.

Thompson, a Reformed Episcopal minister, returned to court again Thursday morning to hear closing arguments only to find that prosecutors again showed the gruesome crime scene photos, including the one of Myra. He held their daughter's hand as the verdicts were read. The entire row of loved ones beside them joined in, too, a chain of understanding. Of hope.

When the verdict was read, "I wasn't surprised at all," Thompson said. "They even came back a little faster than I expected."

Family members hugged.



Family members of the nine people murdered by Dylann Roof at Emanuel AME Church leave the courthouse.

BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

Some smiled. Others simply nodded with each of the 33 charges: guilty.

Next, on Christmas, Thompson will gather a small group of family at the home he and Myra shared. Despite the emotional rigors of the trial, he became determined to decorate their brick bungalow in the regal silver and gold decorations that Myra loved.

"You know what you've gotta do this year ..." Myra used to tell him each year. And he knew what that meant. She expected him to create festive centerpieces for their dining room table and their mantle out of gold poinsettias and silver and gold marbles, all lit with white lights. Her favorite colors.

Myra won't say those words to him this year. But he made the centerpieces anyway — to remember, to mourn and to keep that essence of Myra with him always.



The late Rev. Clementa Pinckney's sister, Johnette Pinckney Martinez (left), and his widow, Jennifer Pinckney, leave the J. Waites Waring Federal Courthouse on Thursday after Dylann Roof was found guilty of all 33 federal charges in the Emanuel AME Church shootings.

BRAD NETTLES/STAFF



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WEEKLY DELIVERIES TO THE TRI-COUNTY AREA



MICHAEL PRONZATO/STAFF

A man walks past Emanuel A.M.E. Church in downtown Charleston on Thursday. Dylann Roof was convicted in the killing of nine black worshippers who had welcomed him to their Bible study at the church.

Death penalty phase next for Roof

ROOF, from A1

They listened quietly, several nodding, many holding hands as the verdicts were read. Afterward, some left smiling. Statements soon poured in from across the country from politicians, gun-control groups and others wishing them peace and expressing relief that justice had been done.

Roof confessed to the killings and his legal team readily acknowledged his guilt. Offering no defense, they instead sought to portray the 22-year-old gunman as a disaffected, delusional loner who was set on a twisted path to murder by racist rantings he found online.

Federal prosecutors urged the jury to cast aside such "distractions" and hold Roof accountable for the carnage he left in his wake.

They described him as a cold, calculating and methodical killer filled with a vast reservoir of hate that he unleashed on nine kind and virtuous churchgoers who had done him no wrong.

They were Cynthia Hurd, 54, a library manager who stayed that night to support a friend; Susie Jackson, 87, a family matriarch who sang in the choir; Ethel Lance, 70, the church sexton and custodian who found strength in gospel songs; Depayne Middleton-Doctor, 49, a minister licensed to preach on the night of the shooting; the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, 41, the church's pastor and a state senator; Tywanza Sanders, 26, a barber, poet and aspiring entrepreneur; the Rev. Daniel Simmons Sr., 74, a sharp-dressing retired pastor who led the Bible study most nights; Sharonda Coleman Singleton, 45, a minister and beloved track coach; and Myra Thompson, 59, an active church trustee chosen to lead the study lesson. These were the people who welcomed Roof into their midst that night.

In the government's emotional closing argument after six days of testimony, Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathan Williams said hatred had no place in the sanctuary of Emanuel, but Roof brought it just the same. He turned his .45-caliber Glock pistol on innocents and peppered them with at least 60 bullets when they were at their most defenseless, their eyes shut for closing prayer, he said.

"In that moment, a man of immense hatred walked around that room shooting person after person after person, stopping only so he could reload more magazines and kill more people," Williams told the jury, his voice growing louder. "It was an act of tremendous cowardice, shooting people as they have their eyes closed in prayer, shooting them on the ground" and as they cowered



MICHAEL PRONZATO/STAFF

Andy Savage waits outside the federal courthouse Thursday after the verdict in the Dylann Roof trial.

under tables.

The families of those killed and survivors cried softly and wiped their eyes, as did one juror, as Williams highlighted the bravery of Sanders, who tried to reason with Roof, and Simmons, who rose to check on the church's pastor after he was shot. As he spoke, Williams showed photographs of the dead sprawled in their fellowship hall juxtaposed with their smiling faces in life. Throughout, jurors leaned forward, listening intently.

Roof, dressed in a light blue sweater and slacks, stared ahead, as he had throughout testimony, showing no emotion. His grandparents also watched quietly, his grandmother leaning her face against one hand.

Roof executed these people, in part, because he viewed them through a racist lens and considered them less than human, Williams said. He viewed apartheid as an ideal and sought to stoke a race war with an attack fueled by a hatred that was "planned, thought-through and horrifically violent," he said.

Roof may have taken their lives, Williams said, but he did not destroy a goodness they exemplified that was greater than his hate. "He does not get to choose who they were, the example that they lived their lives by — not in this church, not in this courtroom."

Williams said the racist journal and online manifesto Roof posted, along with hundreds of photos, showed his dedication to his crooked cause and the "vastness of his hatred." He spent months scouting his target and stockpiling ammunition, casing Emanuel in trip after trip to Charleston, often spending hours outside the house of worship, Williams

said. Roof would later tell FBI agents that he targeted the oldest A.M.E. church in the South because of its historical significance, hoping an attack there would resonate with the world at large.

Lists found in his car contained the names of several other black churches and an African-American festival in Elloree — more signs of the preparation Roof took and the depths of hatred that drove him, Williams said. He then played for the jury a video of Roof taking target practice with the gun he used to kill the Emanuel worshippers, firing again and again with the laser-sighted pistol in the backyard of the home where he lived in Eastover, he said.

Roof's lead attorney, David Bruck, a nationally renowned capital defense lawyer who rested his case Wednesday without calling a single witness, didn't dispute Roof's hand in the crime, but implored jurors to consider why this all came to pass.

Bruck said Roof was motivated by racist rantings and conspiracy theories he found on the internet. That he saw murdering innocents in a church as an appropriate remedy to perceived injustices against whites, raises real questions about his perceptions and state of mind, as does his initial plan to take his life after the mass shooting, he said.

"There is hatred all right, and certainly racism, but it goes a lot further than that," he said.

The jury will return Jan. 3 to decide whether to impose death, or sentence Roof to life imprisonment.

After that, Roof is scheduled to be tried on murder charges in state court, where he also faces the prospect of a death sentence. Ninth Circuit Solicitor Scarlett Wilson, who will prosecute that

case, has been closely following the federal case, and she said she "was proud of my colleagues for a case well tried."

There has been much discussion about whether Wilson will pursue a second trial if Roof is handed a death sentence in

federal court. She said Thursday that she wants to see how the case plays out there before meeting with federal prosecutors and the victims' families to discuss a path forward.

"I am very pleased with what I have seen so far," she said.

Reactions

"It is my hope that the survivors, the families and the people of South Carolina can find some peace in the fact that justice has been served."
— Gov. Nikki Haley

"Dylann Storm Roof was held accountable for the horrific acts of evil he committed last June in the hallowed walls of Mother Emanuel (A.M.E.) church. We can only hope that this verdict brings some measure of comfort to the survivors and families, who remain in our prayers and whose extraordinary faith and grace have so moved us all."
— Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg

"This is the first and significant step in rendering justice for the nine victims who were murdered as they worshipped at Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church. I know nothing can ever completely take away their pain, but I do hope the verdicts will provide some small measure of comfort to the families of the victims."
— U.S. Sen. Lindsay Graham, R-S.C.

"I kept the text I sent my friend Clementa (Pinckney) that night, a text never answered, and I simply pray that this begins to bring families some peace."
— U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C.

"Crimes that shock the collective community conscience coupled with overwhelming evidence of guilt warrant society's ultimate punishment."
— U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy, R-S.C.

"My prayers continue to go out to the families affected, and I think each one of us needs to find a way to send them a prayer here during the Christmas Season."
— U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford, R-S.C.

"We owe it to the community of Charleston — and to communities around the nation touched by gun violence — to not only stand by them in times of tragedy, but to fight every day for the stronger gun laws that will prevent those tragedies."
— Dan Gross, president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence

"When Roof searched 'black on white crime,' he found a flood of white supremacist propaganda. Once hard to access, that propaganda is now just a few keystrokes away from anyone, anywhere, who has access to the internet. ... It's a problem we must address."
— Richard Cohen, president of the Southern Poverty Law Center

"I thank the members of the jury for delivering the appropriate verdict in this awful case, and I wish them wisdom and strength as we await the sentencing phase."
— S.C. Democratic Party Chair Jaime Harrison

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