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**Apr 06 2026**

**SC Court of Appeals**

IN THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In The Court of Appeals

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APPEAL FROM GREENVILLE COUNTY  
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

**The Honorable Patrick C. Fant III Circuit Court Judge**

Case No.: 2019CP2306363

SYLVESTER JACKSON, KAREN ROBINSON,  
MICHAEL ROBINSON, DOROTHY WILLIAMS,  
JOHN WOODFOLK, ERNEST "TERRY"  
MURRAY, DONALD COX, TIMOTHY MCBEE,  
DERRICK COX, REGINALD JACKSON, WILLIE  
FOSTER, CYNTHIA ROBINSON, ZELMA  
BROWN, TELEK COBB, SARAH THOMASON,  
AND THURSHIA JAMISON-JACKSON,

Appellant(s),

Versus

CHARLES "BENNIE" SMITH, ROBIN SMITH,  
LARRY DAWKINS, MABLE DAWKINS, JIMMY  
DAVIS, BRENDA DAVIS, DOROTHY  
THOMASON, L.C. THOMASON, AND JAMES  
SIMS,

Appellee.

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**REPLY TO RETURN TO MOTION TO REINSTATE APPEAL**

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Appellants Charles "Bennie" Smith, Robin Smith, Larry Dawkins, Mable Dawkins, Jimmy Davis, Brenda Davis, Dorothy Thomason, L.C. Thomason, and James Sims, by and through undersigned counsel, respectfully submit this Reply to Respondents' Return to Motion to Reinstate Appeal filed April 6, 2026, and in support thereof would show this Honorable Court as follows:

## INTRODUCTION

A church in Greenville County has been ordered to hold meetings under court supervision. The same church has been ordered to restore named individuals to its membership and leadership. The same church has been placed under ongoing judicial oversight of its internal governance. That church was never sued. It was never served. It was never made a defendant. It was never made a respondent. It was never allowed to walk into the courtroom and speak. When the church tried to be heard in this Court through a limited appearance under Rule 240, that effort was extinguished by a dismissal entered after a letter that counsel never received. Every door has been closed. This Reply asks this Court to open one.

The good cause standard for reinstatement under Rule 260, SCACR, exists for cases like this one. Respondents' Return asks this Court to penalize Appellants for a procedural default that was caused entirely by the failure of the Clerk's electronic communications to reach undersigned counsel. Respondents do not dispute that counsel never received the December 16, 2025 letter. Instead, they argue that counsel should have discovered through independent investigation what the Court's own correspondence system failed to deliver. That argument inverts the purpose of the Court's notification procedures and would impose upon every appellant a duty of continuous independent docket monitoring to guard against the possibility that the Clerk's communications might fail to arrive. The notification system exists precisely so that counsel may rely upon it.

## ARGUMENT

**I. *The Dismissal Resulted from Non-Receipt of the Clerk's Communications, Not from Neglect or Inattention.***

Respondents characterize Appellants' showing as resting on "unsupported assertions" and "generalized assertions regarding email non-receipt." Return at 2. But Respondents themselves acknowledge the central, undisputed fact: undersigned counsel did not receive the Clerk's December 16, 2025 letter. This is not a case of simple neglect. This is not a case in which counsel received the Court's communications and failed to act. This is not a case in which counsel was aware of impending deadlines and disregarded them. Counsel did not receive the email. The communication never arrived.

Respondents demand that counsel produce email logs, affidavits from information-technology personnel, and other corroborating proof that the email did not arrive. This demand asks counsel to prove a negative. The more relevant inquiry is whether the Clerk's Office can demonstrate that the December 16, 2025 letter was successfully delivered to counsel's email address and opened. The Court's own records should reflect whether the electronic transmission was completed, returned, or bounced. Appellants submit that the absence of any response from counsel over a period of three months, standing alone, is itself strong circumstantial evidence that the communication was never received. Had counsel received a letter threatening dismissal of his clients' appeal, counsel would have responded immediately.

Respondents further argue that counsel had a "continuing obligation to monitor the status of their own appeal." Return at 3. While counsel does not dispute a general duty of diligence, the appellate rules establish a notification system precisely because counsel is entitled to rely upon it. The Court sent the December 16, 2025 letter for a reason: to provide counsel with notice and an opportunity to respond before the drastic sanction of dismissal. If the Court intended for counsel to independently monitor the docket without reliance on the Clerk's correspondence, the letter

would have been unnecessary. Counsel's reliance on the notification system he had every reason to believe was functioning does not constitute neglect.

South Carolina law strongly supports reinstatement under these circumstances. Rule 260, SCACR, governs reinstatement of dismissed appeals and provides that a dismissed case may be reinstated by leave of the Court upon a showing of good cause. The good cause standard is not a high bar designed to punish procedural missteps. As the Court of Appeals held in *Jordan v. Hartford Fin. Grp., Inc.*, 435 S.C. 501 (Ct. App. 2021), the good cause standard is designed to excuse honest, harmless human mistakes so that cases may be decided on their merits rather than dismissed due to procedural missteps. The *Jordan* court reversed a summary denial of a motion to reinstate, holding that the failure to provide a rational analysis of the good cause standard was arbitrary and an abuse of discretion. The South Carolina policy, as *Jordan* makes clear, favors resolution of cases on their merits rather than on procedural technicalities, provided there is no evidence of bad faith or actual prejudice to the opposing party.

More directly on point, in *Matute v. Palmetto Health Baptist*, 391 S.C. 291 (Ct. App. 2011), the Court of Appeals affirmed reinstatement of a dismissed appeal where the appealing party claimed it never received the underlying order. The court found good cause for reinstatement based on the non-receipt claim. *Matute* is directly analogous to the present case. There, as here, a party claimed non-receipt of a critical communication and promptly took corrective action when the failure was discovered. There, as here, no contrary evidence demonstrated that the communication had in fact been received. There, as here, the interests of justice favored allowing the case to proceed on its merits. *Matute* establishes that non-receipt of court correspondence is precisely the kind of honest, harmless circumstance that the good cause standard exists to address.

South Carolina law also recognizes that the absence of a response to correspondence does not establish that the correspondence was actually received. In *State v. Binnarr*, 400 S.C. 156 (2012), the South Carolina Supreme Court held that substantial circumstantial evidence of actual notice is not satisfied by a negative inference arising from unreturned first-class mail. By the same logic, the mere fact that counsel did not respond to the December 16, 2025 letter does not establish that the letter was received. To the contrary, when a competent attorney with an active appeal pending in this Court does not respond to a letter threatening dismissal of his clients' case, the most reasonable inference is not that he disregarded the letter but that he never received it.

**II. *The Transcript Timeline Confirms the Absence of Neglect.***

Respondents fault Appellants for not explaining "the absence of any proactive follow-up with the court reporter, the Clerk, or the Office of Court Administration." Return at 2. But Respondents ignore the critical timeline. The transcript was not delivered until January 5, 2026, by email from Velvet Mills, Transcript Manager at Legal Eagle, Inc. This date is twenty days after the December 16, 2025 letter was issued and ten days after the deadline imposed by that letter had already expired. Even if counsel had received the December 16 letter and responded immediately, counsel could not have filed the initial brief because the transcript did not yet exist in completed form.

Respondents' demand for the January 5, 2026 transmittal email, invoice, and affidavit from the transcript manager is noted. Appellants are prepared to supplement this Motion with such documentation if the Court so directs. However, the fact of the transcript's late delivery is not in genuine dispute, and Respondents offer no contrary evidence suggesting the transcript was available at any earlier date.

### ***III. Jackson's Complaint, the Procedural History, and the Order Itself All Reveal the Jurisdictional Defect.***

Read the original caption of Jackson's underlying action. Jackson v. Smith, Civil Action No. 2017-CP-23-05851, was filed September 11, 2017, as a Complaint for Declaratory Judgment in the Court of Common Pleas for Greenville County. The plaintiffs are sixteen individuals: Sylvester Jackson, Karen Robinson, Michael Robinson, Dorothy Williams, John Woodfolk, Ernest "Terry" Murray, Donald Cox, Timothy McBee, Derrick Cox, Reginald Jackson, Willie Foster, Cynthia Robinson, Zelma Brown, Telek Cobb, Sarah Thomason, and Thurshia Jamison-Jackson. The defendants are nine individuals: Charles "Bennie" Smith, Robin Smith, Larry Dawkins, Mable Dawkins, Jimmy Davis, Brenda Davis, Dorothy Thomason, L.C. Thomason, and James Sims. Enoree Fork Baptist Church is not a plaintiff. Enoree Fork Baptist Church is not a defendant. Enoree Fork Baptist Church is not a party at all. Jackson's complaint sets out five causes of action, each seeking declaratory judgment and nothing more: declarations regarding the bylaws, the identity of the lawful Pastor, the identity of the lawful Active members, the identity of the lawful officers, and the identity of the lawful Trustees. Jackson does not ask the court to order the Church to do anything. Jackson asks only for declarations.

Read the procedural history that followed. Two weeks after Jackson filed his action, the opposing faction filed a separate action in the name of Enoree Fork Baptist Church as Civil Action No. 2017-CP-23-06127. On February 3, 2020, Judge Gravely consolidated both actions on Defendant Jackson's motion, over the objection of the Church. The consolidation order specifically cited *Creel v. King*, 287 S.C. 205, 336 S.E.2d 480 (1985), for the proposition that "a trial judge may consolidate cases over a party's objection under Rule 42(a)." Judge Gravely then referred the consolidated case to the Master in Equity. On May 8, 2023, Judge Morgan held that Enoree Fork

Baptist Church had requested a jury trial in its Amended Complaint and had not waived that right. On May 10, 2023, Judge Simmons referred the consolidated case back to the Circuit Court for a jury trial, finding that the legal issues were "so intertwined with equitable issues that a trial on the equitable issues alone would be impossible."

Read what was actually tried. The trial court bifurcated the consolidated cases. The Court "scheduled Plaintiff Sylvester Jackson's Declaratory Judgment Causes of Action for a non-jury trial on June 20, 2025, and stated it would schedule EFBC's claims for a jury trial after it decided the declaratory judgment issues." Order at 5. On June 20, 2025, the Court conducted a non-jury trial limited to Pastor Jackson's declaratory judgment claims. The Church's claims have never been tried. The Church's jury trial has never been held. The Church's case remains pending and unheard.

Read the Order being appealed. The Order is titled "Order Regarding Plaintiffs' Causes of Action for Declaratory Judgment." The plaintiffs referenced in that title are Sylvester Jackson and his fifteen co-plaintiffs from Civil Action No. 2017-CP-23-05851. The Church is not among them. Yet the Order purports to bind the Church. The Order directs the Church to hold a church business meeting on Saturday, August 30, 2025, at the Enoree River Association, 421 Dallas Road, Greenville, at 2:00 PM, with a moderator chosen by the attorneys, with announcements on two specific Sundays, with attendance restricted to a specific list of persons, for the specific purpose of voting on whether to terminate Pastor Jackson, in accordance with EFBC's 1996 Constitution and Bylaws. Order at 25. And the Court "retains jurisdiction over this case to assure compliance with this Order... until the final vote of EFBC's Congregation is reached." Id.

Now read what the same Order says about the First Cause of Action. Jackson's First Cause of Action asked the Court to declare which set of bylaws was appropriate to govern the Church. The Court refused to decide that question. In the Court's own words: "It is not the function of the

courts to dictate procedures for a church to follow." The Court "refuses to consider or provide any relief in regard to Plaintiffs' First Cause of Action and hereby denies the Cause of Action for lack of subject matter jurisdiction." Order at 18. The same Order that says it cannot dictate procedures for a church proceeds to dictate every conceivable procedure for the church. The same Order that denies the First Cause of Action for lack of subject matter jurisdiction retains jurisdiction over the church to ensure compliance with that very dictation. The internal contradiction is not a matter of interpretation. It appears in the text of the Order.

The Order also cites *Knotts v. Williams*, 319 S.C. 473, 462 S.E.2d 288 (1995), the controlling South Carolina authority on civil court jurisdiction in Baptist congregational disputes. The Court quoted the dispositive rule from *Knotts*: "If the Court finds that no action has been taken by the congregation in regard to the litigation, then the appropriate action is to dismiss the case for lack of subject matter jurisdiction." Order at 17. The Court then made the factual finding that "the congregation of Enoree Fork Baptist Church never officially met pursuant to EFBC's 1996 Constitution and Bylaws for the purpose of disposing of Plaintiff Sylvester Jackson." Order at 1. By the rule the Court itself cited and applied, the required action was dismissal. The Court did not dismiss. The Court restored the "status quo," ordered the meetings, dictated the procedures, and retained jurisdiction over the Church.

Three independent defects converge in a single ruling. The Order grants relief against an entity that was never a party to the case actually tried. The Order grants mandatory relief in a declaratory judgment action that sought only declarations. And the Order violates both the express command of S.C. Code Ann. § 15-53-80 and the express requirements of *Knotts v. Williams* that the Court itself cited and applied.

South Carolina law confirms what the Order itself reveals. The Declaratory Judgments Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 15-53-80, provides that all persons with an interest affected by a declaratory judgment must be made parties, and that "no declaration shall prejudice the rights of persons not parties to the proceeding." The Church has the most direct interest imaginable in any declaration about its own pastor, members, officers, and governance. Yet the Church was not a party to Jackson's case. The Court of Appeals applied this principle in *Hannemann v. McFarland*, 2023 S.C. App. Unpub. LEXIS 359 (Ct. App. Sept. 6, 2023), vacating a master-in-equity order in a declaratory judgment action that compelled a non-party HOA to transfer records. There, as here, a declaratory judgment action proceeded without the entity whose conduct was directly at issue. There, as here, the trial court entered an order directing the non-party entity to take specific action. There, the Court of Appeals vacated the order. Here, the same result is required.

The South Carolina Supreme Court has held that a judgment is void ab initio when the rendering court lacked personal jurisdiction, lacked subject matter jurisdiction, or failed to provide due process. *Ware v. Ware*, 404 S.C. 1 (2013). The Order satisfies all three grounds. The court lacked personal jurisdiction because the Church was never served in Jackson's case. The court lacked subject matter jurisdiction because no claim was ever asserted against the Church in Jackson's case, because the Court itself denied the First Cause of Action on this exact ground, and because the Court itself cited *Knotts v. Williams* which required dismissal. And the Church was denied due process because it had no notice and no opportunity to be heard in the case that produced the order binding it. Defects of subject matter jurisdiction cannot be waived. *State v. Guthrie*, 352 S.C. 103 (Ct. App. 2002). They cannot be defaulted. They cannot be lost through a missed deadline. They can be raised at any time. The question survives any procedural posture. This Court has both the authority and the obligation to address it.

Beyond the jurisdictional defect, the orders raise grave constitutional concerns. A civil court cannot supervise the internal governance of a religious organization. *Presbyterian Church v. Hull Church*, 393 U.S. 440 (1969); *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church v. EEOC*, 565 U.S. 171 (2012); *Watson v. Jones*, 80 U.S. 679 (1872); *Ira Banks v. St. Matthew Baptist Church*, 406 S.C. 156 (2013). This Court need not reach these constitutional questions today. The narrower point is enough. The lower court tried Jackson's case alone in a non-jury proceeding. The lower court denied the First Cause of Action for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. The lower court cited authority that required dismissal. The lower court then ordered the Church to take specific actions, dictating every detail. Those orders are void.

#### **IV. *The Party Actually Prejudiced Is the Church.***

Respondents claim they will be prejudiced by reinstatement. They identify no missing witness. They identify no lost evidence. They identify no changed circumstance. The only prejudice they describe is delay in reaching finality. That is not prejudice. That is the function of appellate review.

Consider, by contrast, what has happened to Enoree Fork Baptist Church.

The lower court entered orders against the Church. The Church was never made a defendant in Jackson's case. The Church was never served in Jackson's case. The Church was never given notice. The Church was never given a hearing. The Church was never allowed to appear at trial. When the Church tried to enter a limited appearance in this Court through the Rule 240 motion filed August 19, 2025, that motion was its only available mechanism to bring its objections before any tribunal. The dismissal of March 19, 2026, extinguished that motion without ever reaching its merits.

More than that. The Church had its own pending case, Civil Action No. 2017-CP-23-06127, which was consolidated with Jackson's case in 2020 over the Church's objection. The Church requested and was confirmed to be entitled to a jury trial on its claims. The trial court bifurcated the consolidated cases and tried Jackson's declaratory judgment claims first in a non-jury proceeding. The Court "stated it would schedule EFBC's claims for a jury trial after it decided the declaratory judgment issues." Order at 5. That jury trial has never been held. The Order being appealed comes from the non-jury trial of Jackson's claims, and it disposes of the questions on which the Church's pending claims depend, all without the Church ever having received the jury trial it was entitled to.

Count the doors. The trial court door was closed because the Church was not a party to Jackson's case. The Church's own case door was closed because the trial court tried Jackson's claims first in a non-jury proceeding and never reached the Church's claims. The Rule 240 door was closed because the dismissal mooted it. The appellate review door is now closed because the appeal has been dismissed. If this Court allows the dismissal to stand, the Church will have been ordered to do specific things by a court that never let it speak, and no court at any level will have heard the Church's voice on the validity of those orders.

That is prejudice. That is the systematic exclusion of an affected party from any forum at any level of the South Carolina court system. Respondents' inconvenience in litigating an appeal that was timely filed does not begin to compare.

Jordan and Matute. Ware and Hannemann. Guthrie. Section 15-53-80. Each authority points the same direction. Each authority requires the same result. This appeal must be reinstated so that issues no court has yet heard can finally be addressed.

## CONCLUSION

Counsel never received the Clerk's letter. The transcript did not arrive until after the deadline in that letter had already passed. The good cause standard exists for circumstances like these. *Jordan v. Hartford Fin. Grp., Inc.*; *Matute v. Palmetto Health Baptist*. The orders below were entered in a declaratory judgment action against a non-party church that was never sued, never served, and never heard, and they granted mandatory relief that was never requested. Those orders are void under the express command of S.C. Code Ann. § 15-53-80, the joinder provision of the Declaratory Judgments Act, and under the void-judgment doctrine of *Hannemann v. McFarland*, *Knotts v. Williams*, and *Ware v. Ware*. Subject matter jurisdiction can be raised at any time and cannot be waived. *State v. Guthrie*. And the party most prejudiced by what has happened in this case is the church that no court has yet allowed to speak.

For good cause shown, Appellants respectfully request that this Court grant the Motion to Reinstate Appeal, vacate the Order of Dismissal filed March 19, 2026, reinstate the pending Motion for Notice of Appearance and Limited Representation for Non-Party Church Entity Pursuant to Rule 240, SCACR, and grant Appellants a reasonable period of time within which to file the Record on Appeal and Appellants' Initial Brief.

Respectfully Submitted,

s/Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

**FLETCHER N. SMITH, JR., ESQ.**

S.C. Bar No.: 5165

P.O. Box 10496, F.S.

112 WAKEFIELD STREET

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(864) 232-6541

ATTORNEYS FOR THE Appellants

Greenville, South Carolina

Dated: April 6, 2026

**THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In The Court of Appeals  
Appeal From Greenville County  
In The Court Of Common Pleas  
Patrick C. Fant III Circuit Court Judge  
Appellate Case No. 2025-001623**

**ENOREE FORK BAPTIST CHURCH**

Plaintiff,

vs.

**Sylvester Jackson, Stepping-Stone Ministries, Inc., William M. Landreth, Landreth Properties, LLC, Cordell Porter, Donald Cox, Ernest Murray, Crescom Bank/Formerly Greer State Bank, and Rodney Butler**

Defendants.

**AND**

**SYLVESTER JACKSON, KAREN ROBINSON, MICHAEL ROBINSON, DOROTHY WILLIAMS, JOHN WOODFOLK, ERNEST "TERRY" MURRAY, DONALD COX, TIMOTHY MCBEE, DERRICK COX, REGINALD JACKSON, WILLIE FOSTER, CYNTHIA ROBINSON, ZELMA BROWN, TELEK COBB, SARAH THOMASON, and THURSHIA JAMISON-JACKSON,**

Respondents,

v.

**CHARLES "BENNIE" SMITH, ROBIN SMITH, LARRY DAWKINS, MABLE DAWKINS, JIMMY DAVIS, BRENDA DAVIS, DOROTHY THOMASON, L.C. THOMASON, and JAMES SIMS,**

Appellants.

**PROOF OF SERVICE**

I, Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., Attorney for the Appellants, do hereby certify and attest that on this 6th day of April 2026, I served a true and correct copy of the foregoing **REPLY TO RETURN TO MOTION TO REINSTATE APPEAL** upon all counsel of record and parties entitled to service by depositing a copy of same in the United States Postal System, postage prepaid, and by transmitting a copy by electronic mail to the following:

**PARTY SERVED:**

**Counsel for Respondents:**

**Rustin B. Duncan, Esq.**

King Law Offices, PC

955 W Wade Hampton Blvd, Ste 8A

Greer, SC 29650

**Garrett Miller Simpson, Esq.**

(Address on file with the Court)

**Patrick Ian Toomey, Esq.**

(Address on file with the Court)

**Greenville County Clerk of Court**

**301 University Ridge**

**Greenville, SC 29601**

**Service by: Electronic Mail and First-Class Mail.**

By: s/Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

S.C. Bar No.: 5165  
FLETCHER N. SMITH, JR., ESQ.  
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112 WAKEFIELD STREET  
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ATTORNEYS FOR THE Appellants

Greenville, South Carolina

Dated: April 6, 2026

EXHIBIT A

AFFIDAVIT

**THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In The Court of Appeals**

**Appeal From Greenville County  
In The Court Of Common Pleas**

**Patrick C. Fant III Circuit Court Judge**

Docket No.: 202110318 CASE ID. NUMBER 3049442

Appellate Case No. 2025-001623

**ENOREE FORK BAPTIST CHURCH**

Plaintiff,

vs.

**Sylvester Jackson, Stepping-Stone Ministries, Inc., William M. Landreth, Landreth Properties, LLC, Cordell Porter, Donald Cox, Ernest Murray, Crescom Bank/Formerly Greer State Bank, and Rodney Butler**

Defendants.

**AND**

**SYLVESTER JACKSON, KAREN ROBINSON, MICHAEL ROBINSON, DOROTHY WILLIAMS, JOHN WOODFOLK, ERNEST "TERRY" MURRAY, DONALD COX, TIMOTHY MCBEE, DERRICK COX, REGINALD JACKSON, WILLIE FOSTER, CYNTHIA ROBINSON, ZELMA BROWN, TELEK COBB, SARAH THOMASON, and THURSHIA JAMISON-JACKSON,**

Respondents,

v.

**CHARLES "BENNIE" SMITH, ROBIN SMITH, LARRY DAWKINS, MABLE DAWKINS, JIMMY DAVIS, BRENDA DAVIS, DOROTHY THOMASON, L.C. THOMASON, and JAMES SIMS,**

Appellants.

**AFFIDAVIT OF FLETCHER N. SMITH, JR.**

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA            )  
  )  
COUNTY OF GREENVILLE            )       AFFIDAVIT

PERSONALLY APPEARED before me the undersigned Notary Public, Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., who, being first duly sworn, deposes and states as follows:

1. I am Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., an attorney duly licensed to practice law in the State of South Carolina, S.C. Bar No. 5165. I maintain my law office at 112 Wakefield Street, P.O. Box 10496, Greenville, South Carolina 29603, under the firm name Fletcher N. Smith Attorney at Law, LLC.
2. I am counsel of record for the Appellants Charles "Bennie" Smith, Robin Smith, Larry Dawkins, Mable Dawkins, Jimmy Davis, Brenda Davis, Dorothy Thomason, L.C. Thomason, and James Sims in the above-captioned appeal, Appellate Case No. 2025-001623.
3. I make this Affidavit from my own personal knowledge and in support of Appellants' Motion to Reinstate Appeal and Reply to Respondents' Return to Motion to Reinstate Appeal. I am competent to testify to the matters stated herein.

**NON-RECEIPT OF THE CLERK'S DECEMBER 16, 2025 LETTER**

4. At all times relevant to this appeal, I have maintained a valid and functioning email address on file with the South Carolina Court of Appeals. My email address of record with this Court is fsmith@bellsouth.net, which appears on the Notice of Appeal and all other filings I have submitted in this matter.

5. I did not receive the letter dated December 16, 2025, from Deputy Clerk Jasmine D. Smith of the South Carolina Court of Appeals directing me to advise the Court of the status of the transcript within ten days. I did not receive this letter by electronic mail. I did not receive this letter by United States Mail. I did not receive this letter by any other means.
6. I likewise did not receive any prior electronic communications from the Clerk's Office regarding scheduling orders, transcript deadlines, or briefing deadlines in this appeal. Had I received the December 16, 2025 letter or any prior communication advising that the appeal was in jeopardy of dismissal, I would have responded immediately to the Court and to opposing counsel.
7. The first notice I received of any issue with the status of the appeal was when I received the Order of this Court filed March 19, 2026, dismissing the appeal. Upon receiving that Order, I immediately began preparation of the Motion to Reinstate Appeal, which was filed within the fifteen-day period provided by Rule 260, SCACR.
8. The failure of the December 16, 2025 letter to reach me was not the result of any negligence, inattention, or disregard on my part. I have been actively practicing law in South Carolina for decades, I regularly handle appellate matters before this Court, and I am familiar with the consequences of failing to respond to correspondence from the Clerk's Office.

#### **CHRONOLOGY OF THE TRANSCRIPT REQUEST AND DELIVERY**

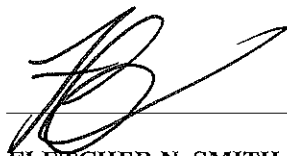
9. The transcript of the June 20, 2025 proceeding before the Honorable Patrick C. Fant III in Civil Action No. 2019-CP-23-06363 was prepared by Legal Eagle, Inc., 107 LeGrand Boulevard, Greenville, South Carolina 29607. The Transcript Manager at Legal Eagle, Inc., is Velvet Mills, whose email address is [vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com).

10. The following is a true and accurate chronological account of the email communications between my office and Legal Eagle, Inc., regarding the procurement of the transcript in this matter. True and correct copies of each email are attached to this Affidavit as Exhibits 1 through 9.
11. Email No. 1 – September 15, 2025, 2:55 PM. Court Administration (Transcripts@sccourts.org) transmitted a summarized transcript request (Request ID No. 1203199653) confirming that the transcript of the June 20, 2025 proceeding in Jackson v. Smith had been assigned for production. The request reflected that I was the requesting attorney, that Plaintiff's counsel was Jeffrey Alton Phillips, and that the presiding judge was the Honorable Patrick C. Fant III. The delivery timeframe was Regular Delivery (60 days), with delivery by PDF and hard copy via Priority Mail, and the entire hearing was to be transcribed. (Exhibit 1).
12. Email No. 2 – September 15, 2025, 4:58 PM. Velvet Mills, Transcript Manager at Legal Eagle, Inc., emailed me confirming that Legal Eagle had been assigned the transcript request. Ms. Mills advised that the transcript was estimated to be approximately 120 pages, that the estimated cost for Standard Delivery (60 days) by PDF/Email was \$510.00, that the page estimate was not guaranteed, and that a final invoice would be sent upon completion. (Exhibit 2).
13. Email No. 3 – September 15, 2025, 5:18 PM. I responded to Ms. Mills's email from my iPhone, seeking clarification as to the case to which her message related, and replied: "What case is this?" (Exhibit 3).
14. Email No. 4 – September 15, 2025, 5:21 PM. Ms. Mills responded, identifying the case as Sylvester Jackson v. Charles Bennie Smith. (Exhibit 4).

15. Email No. 5 – December 17, 2025, 3:15 PM. Loretta Maddox, my Legal Administrator at Fletcher N. Smith Attorney at Law, LLC, sent written confirmation to Legal Eagle authorizing production of the transcript, stating: "Yes! Confirmed." (Exhibit 5).
16. Email No. 6 – December 17, 2025, 3:50 PM. Velvet Mills acknowledged Ms. Maddox's confirmation and advised: "Thank you for your call earlier. I'm glad we were able to get to the bottom of it. I have put it into production." The transcript was placed into production by Legal Eagle on December 17, 2025. (Exhibit 6).
17. Email No. 7 – January 5, 2026, 8:47 AM. Velvet Mills transmitted by email the completed transcript and invoice for the matter. The subject line of the email identified the attachments as: (1) the certified transcript of the proceeding in Docket No. 2019-CP-23-06363, Sylvester Jackson, et al. v. Charles Bennie Smith, et al.; and (2) Invoice No. 109076. January 5, 2026 is the date on which I first received the completed transcript in this matter. (Exhibit 7).
18. Email No. 8 – February 12, 2026, 10:19 AM. Kevin Dehlinger, Director of Operations for Legal Eagle, Inc., contacted my office advising that payment had not yet been received for Invoice No. 109076, and requested information as to when payment might be made. (Exhibit 8).
19. Email No. 9 – February 12, 2026, 3:33 PM. Ms. Maddox responded to Mr. Dehlinger, requesting the date of the deposition reflected in the transcript in order to assist in processing the payment. (Exhibit 9).
20. The emails described in paragraphs 11 through 19 and attached as Exhibits 1 through 9 are true and correct copies of the original email communications as they exist in my office's email records. I have not altered, modified, or edited the content of any of these emails.

**KEY FACTS ESTABLISHED BY THE CHRONOLOGY**

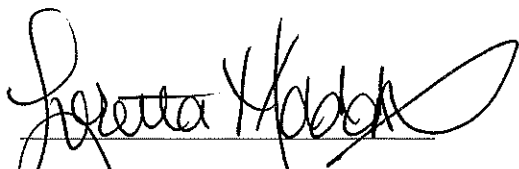
21. The transcript of the June 20, 2025 proceeding in this matter was not delivered to my office until January 5, 2026. The certified transcript and Invoice No. 109076 were transmitted by email from Velvet Mills of Legal Eagle, Inc., on that date.
22. January 5, 2026 is twenty days after the December 16, 2025 letter from the Clerk's Office was issued, and ten days after the ten-day response period set in that letter had already expired.
23. Even if I had received the December 16, 2025 letter on the date it was issued and had responded immediately, I could not have filed Appellants' Initial Brief within the ten-day period contemplated by the Court, because the transcript had not yet been prepared, completed, or delivered to my office.
24. The transcript has been in my possession since January 5, 2026. I stand ready to proceed immediately with the preparation and filing of the Record on Appeal and Appellants' Initial Brief upon reinstatement of this appeal.
25. FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT.



FLETCHER N. SMITH, JR.  
S.C. Bar No.: 5165  
Attorney for Appellants

SWORN to and subscribed before me

this 6 day of April, 2026.



Notary Public for South Carolina  
My Commission Expires: 11.26.2034

**THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In The Court of Appeals**

**Appeal From Greenville County  
In The Court Of Common Pleas**

**Patrick C. Fant III Circuit Court Judge**

Docket No.: 202110318 CASE ID. NUMBER 3049442

Appellate Case No. 2025-001623

**ENOREE FORK BAPTIST CHURCH**

Plaintiff,

vs.

**Sylvester Jackson, Stepping-Stone Ministries, Inc., William M. Landreth, Landreth Properties, LLC, Cordell Porter, Donald Cox, Ernest Murray, Crescom Bank/Formerly Greer State Bank, and Rodney Butler**

Defendants.

**AND**

**SYLVESTER JACKSON, KAREN ROBINSON, MICHAEL ROBINSON, DOROTHY WILLIAMS, JOHN WOODFOLK, ERNEST "TERRY" MURRAY, DONALD COX, TIMOTHY MCBEE, DERRICK COX, REGINALD JACKSON, WILLIE FOSTER, CYNTHIA ROBINSON, ZELMA BROWN, TELEK COBB, SARAH THOMASON, and THURSHIA JAMISON-JACKSON,**

Respondents,

v.

**CHARLES "BENNIE" SMITH, ROBIN SMITH, LARRY DAWKINS, MABLE DAWKINS, JIMMY DAVIS, BRENDA DAVIS, DOROTHY THOMASON, L.C. THOMASON, and JAMES SIMS,**

Appellants.

# **EXHIBIT 1**

## **South Carolina Court Administration Transcript Request Confirmation**

September 15, 2025, 2:55 PM

*Email from Transcripts@sccourts.org transmitting summarized transcript request (Request ID No. 1203199653) confirming assignment of the transcript of the June 20, 2025 proceeding in Jackson v. Smith, Greenville County Circuit Court, Civil Action No. 2019-CP-23-06363, with Regular Delivery (60 days).*

Attached to Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

## Fletcher Smith

---

**From:** Transcripts@sccourts.org  
**Sent:** Monday, September 15, 2025 2:55 PM  
**To:** Transcripts  
**Subject:** Transcript Request for Docket Number 2019CP2306363

Greetings,

The **summarized transcript request shown below** was received today for a case in which you were the assigned court reporter or you have been assigned as the transcriptionist. Pursuant to South Carolina Appellate Court Rule 207, upon receipt of a request for a transcript, you have five (5) business days to respond to the requestor with an estimated cost for production. Pursuant to Rule 207(a)(1), SCACR, copies of this communication are being provided to all parties, the Office of Court Administration, and the clerk of the applicable appellate court.

[Click here](#) to accept or reject the transcript request.

If you need further assistance, please contact us at [transcripts@sccourts.org](mailto:transcripts@sccourts.org).

Regards,

Court Administration

Summarized Transcript Request ID: **1203199653**

## Requester Information:

**Name:** Fletcher Smith  
**Entity:** *Not entered*  
**Phone Number:** (864) 232-6541  
**Email:** [fnsmith@bellsouth.net](mailto:fnsmith@bellsouth.net)  
**Address:** 112 Wakefield Street Greenville, SC 29601  
**Is the requester a party on the case?** No  
**Does the requester represent a party?** Yes Charles Smith

## Transcript Information:

**Docket Number:** 2019CP2306363  
**Court Type:** Circuit  
**County:** Greenville  
**Case Caption:** Jackson, Sylvester vs Smith, Charles Bennie  
**Appeal Pending?** Court of Appeals  
**Death Penalty?** No

**Start Date of Proceeding:** 6/20/2025

**End Date of Proceeding:** 6/20/2025

**Presiding Judge:** Fant, Patrick C. III

**Court reporter daily assignments:**

**06/20/2025:** Contract Circuit, LE

**Opposing Counsel and/or other parties information:**

(Attorney) Fletcher N. Jr. Smith

**(email):** fnsmith@bellsouth.net

(Defendant) Charles Bennie Smith

(Plaintiff) Sylvester Jackson

(Plaintiff Attorney) Jeffrey Alton Phillips

**Next hearing date:** *Date not entered*

**Portion of proceeding to be transcribed:** Entire Hearing

## **Delivery Information:**

**Delivery Timeframe:** Regular Delivery (60 days)

**Delivery Method:** PDF & Hard Copy via Priority Mail (\$50 + shipping)

**Delivery Timeframe:** Private/Self

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Appellants.

# **EXHIBIT 2**

## **Legal Eagle, Inc. Notification of Transcript Assignment**

September 15, 2025, 4:58 PM

*Email from Velvet Mills, Transcript Manager, Legal Eagle, Inc., advising Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., that Legal Eagle had been assigned the transcript request, estimating approximately 120 pages and \$510.00 for Standard Delivery (60 days) by PDF/Email.*

Attached to Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

## Fletcher Smith

---

**From:** Velvet Mills <vmills@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 15, 2025 5:21 PM  
**To:** Fletcher Smith  
**Subject:** RE: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

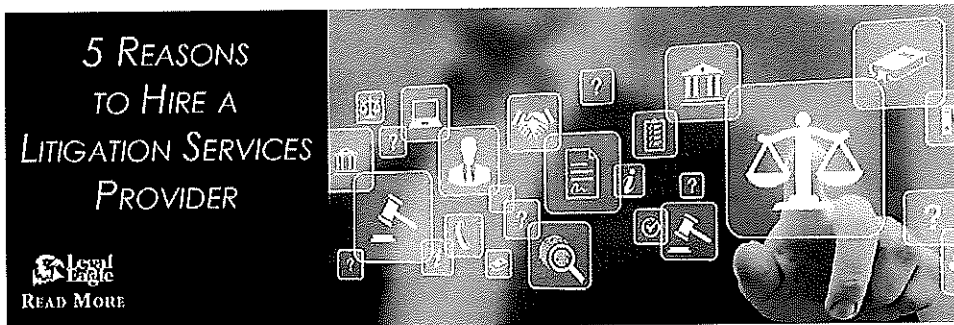
Sylvester Jackson vs Charles Bennie Smith



**Velvet Mills**  
Transcript Manager | Legal Eagle

**M** (864) 325-5486 | **P** (864) 467-1373  
**E** [vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)

107 LeGrand Blvd., Greenville, SC  
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---

**From:** Fletcher Smith <fsmith@piedmontlegal.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 15, 2025 5:18 PM  
**To:** Velvet Mills <vmills@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Cc:** Fletcher Smith <fsmith@bellsouth.net>; Transcripts <transcripts@sccourts.org>; info <info@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

What case is this?  
Fletcher  
Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 15, 2025, at 4:58 PM, Velvet Mills <[vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)> wrote:

Fletcher,

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Thank you,

<image001.png> **Velvet Mills**  
Transcript Manager | Legal Eagle  
  
**M** (864) 325-5486 | **P** (864) 467-1373  
**E** [vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)  
  
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<image003.png>

<image004.png>

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Appellants.

# **EXHIBIT 3**

## **Counsel's Reply Seeking Case Identification**

September 15, 2025, 5:18 PM

*Email from Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., to Velvet Mills seeking clarification as to the case to which her message related: "What case is this?"*

Attached to Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

## Fletcher Smith

---

**From:** Fletcher Smith  
**Sent:** Monday, September 15, 2025 5:18 PM  
**To:** Velvet Mills  
**Cc:** Fletcher Smith; Transcripts; info  
**Subject:** Re: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

What case is this?  
Fletcher  
Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 15, 2025, at 4:58 PM, Velvet Mills <vmills@legaleagleinc.com> wrote:

Fletcher,

Today, Legal Eagle was assigned your transcript request in the above referenced matter. Based upon our review of the records, it appears this transcript will be approximately 120 pages long. The following was indicated on the request from:

1. Standard Delivery (60 Days)
2. PDF/Email Requested

The estimated standard delivery cost for this transcript is \$510.00.

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Once you have authorized us to proceed by responding to this email, we will place your transcript inline for production with a 60-day due date, although transcripts are usually completed much earlier. If you have any questions, please let us know.

Thank you,

**Velvet Mills**

<image001.png> Transcript Manager | Legal Eagle

**M** (864) 325-5486 | **P** (864) 467-1373  
**E** [vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)

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<image003.png>

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Appellants.

# **EXHIBIT 4**

## **Legal Eagle, Inc. Response Identifying the Case**

September 15, 2025, 5:21 PM

*Email from Velvet Mills to Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., identifying the case as Sylvester*

*Jackson v. Charles Bennie Smith.*

Attached to Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

## Fletcher Smith

---

**From:** Velvet Mills <vmills@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 15, 2025 4:58 PM  
**To:** Fletcher Smith (fsmith@bellsouth.net)  
**Cc:** Transcripts; info  
**Subject:** Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

Fletcher,

Today, Legal Eagle was assigned your transcript request in the above referenced matter. Based upon our review of the records, it appears this transcript will be approximately 120 pages long. The following was indicated on the request from:

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Thank you,

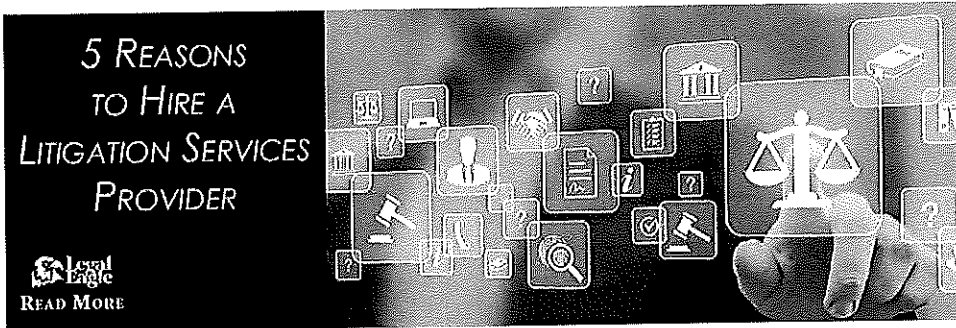


**Velvet Mills**  
Transcript Manager | Legal Eagle

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**E** [vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)

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Appellants.

# **EXHIBIT 5**

## **Authorization for Production of Transcript**

December 17, 2025, 3:15 PM

*Email from Loretta Maddox, Legal Administrator, Fletcher N. Smith Attorney at Law, LLC, to Velvet Mills and Legal Eagle, Inc., providing written confirmation authorizing production of the transcript: "Yes! Confirmed."*

Attached to Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

## Fletcher Smith

---

**From:** Velvet Mills <vmills@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 17, 2025 3:50 PM  
**To:** Loretta Maddox; Fletcher Smith  
**Cc:** Fletcher Smith; Transcripts; info  
**Subject:** RE: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

Loretta,

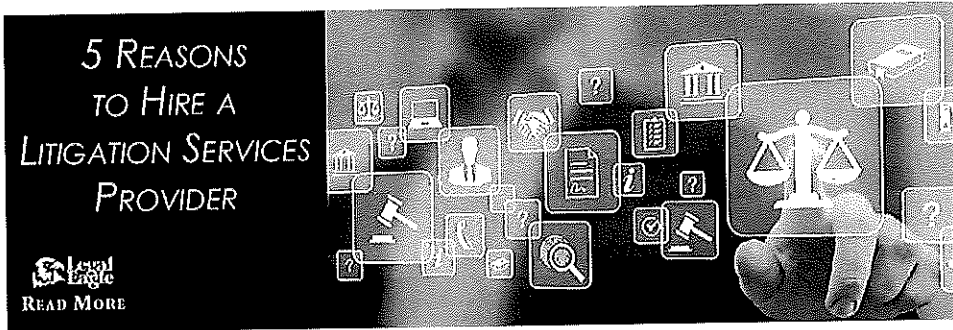
Thank you for your call earlier. I'm glad we were able to get to the bottom of it. I have put it into production.



**Velvet Mills**  
Transcript Manager | Legal Eagle

**M** (864) 325-5486 | **P** (864) 467-1373  
**E** [vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)

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---

**From:** Loretta Maddox <Loretta@piedmontlegal.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 17, 2025 3:15 PM  
**To:** Fletcher Smith <fsmith@piedmontlegal.com>; Velvet Mills <vmills@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Cc:** Fletcher Smith <fsmith@bellsouth.net>; Transcripts <transcripts@sccourts.org>; info <info@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

Yes! Confirmed

Thank you,

Loretta Maddox

Legal Administrator to Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., Esq.

112 Wakefield St. (29601)

PO BOX 10496

Greenville, SC 29603

[loretta@piedmontlegal.com](mailto:loretta@piedmontlegal.com)

---

**From:** Fletcher Smith <[fsmith@piedmontlegal.com](mailto:fsmith@piedmontlegal.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, September 15, 2025 5:18 PM

**To:** Velvet Mills <[vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)>

**Cc:** Fletcher Smith <[fsmith@bellsouth.net](mailto:fsmith@bellsouth.net)>; Transcripts <[transcripts@sccourts.org](mailto:transcripts@sccourts.org)>; info <[info@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:info@legaleagleinc.com)>

**Subject:** Re: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

What case is this?

Fletcher

Sent from my iPhone

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Thank you,

<image001.png> **Velvet Mills**

Transcript Manager | Legal Eagle

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<image002.png>

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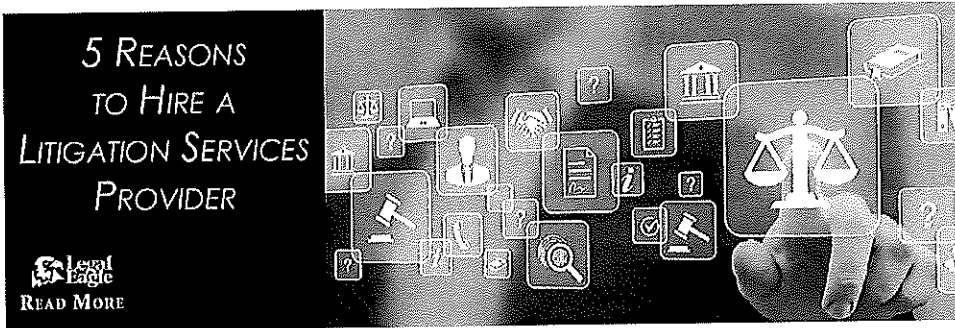
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**From:** Velvet Mills <vmills@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 17, 2025 3:50 PM  
**To:** Loretta Maddox <Loretta@piedmontlegal.com>; Fletcher Smith <fsmith@piedmontlegal.com>  
**Cc:** Fletcher Smith <fsmith@bellsouth.net>; Transcripts <transcripts@sccourts.org>; info <info@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Subject:** RE: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

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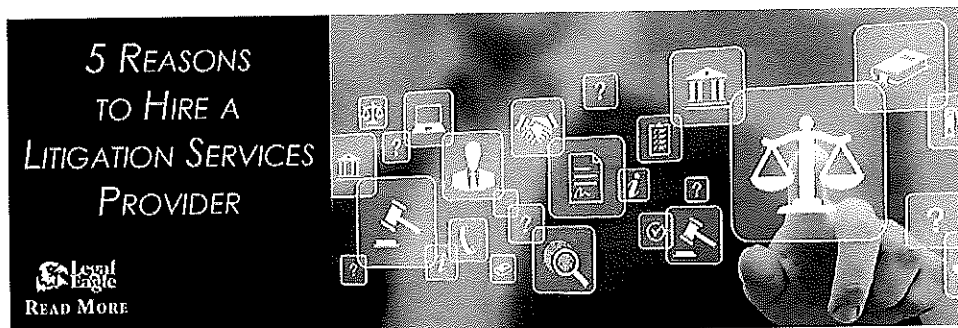


**Velvet Mills**  
Transcript Manager | Legal Eagle

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**THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In The Court of Appeals**

**Appeal From Greenville County  
In The Court Of Common Pleas**

**Patrick C. Fant III Circuit Court Judge**

Docket No.: 202110318 CASE ID. NUMBER 3049442

Appellate Case No. 2025-001623

**ENOREE FORK BAPTIST CHURCH**

Plaintiff,

vs.

**Sylvester Jackson, Stepping-Stone Ministries, Inc., William M. Landreth, Landreth Properties, LLC, Cordell Porter, Donald Cox, Ernest Murray, Crescom Bank/Formerly Greer State Bank, and Rodney Butler**

Defendants.

**AND**

**SYLVESTER JACKSON, KAREN ROBINSON, MICHAEL ROBINSON, DOROTHY WILLIAMS, JOHN WOODFOLK, ERNEST "TERRY" MURRAY, DONALD COX, TIMOTHY MCBEE, DERRICK COX, REGINALD JACKSON, WILLIE FOSTER, CYNTHIA ROBINSON, ZELMA BROWN, TELEK COBB, SARAH THOMASON, and THURSHIA JAMISON-JACKSON,**

Respondents,

v.

**CHARLES "BENNIE" SMITH, ROBIN SMITH, LARRY DAWKINS, MABLE DAWKINS, JIMMY DAVIS, BRENDA DAVIS, DOROTHY THOMASON, L.C. THOMASON, and JAMES SIMS,**

Appellants.

# **EXHIBIT 6**

## **Legal Eagle, Inc. Acknowledgment and Placement into Production**

December 17, 2025, 3:50 PM

*Email from Velvet Mills to Loretta Maddox and Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.,  
acknowledging the confirmation and advising: "Thank you for your call earlier.  
I'm glad we were able to get to the bottom of it. I have put it into production."*

Attached to Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

sender. If you received this message by mistake, please reply to this message and follow with its deletion, so that we can ensure such a mistake does not occur in the future.

---

**From:** Loretta Maddox <[Loretta@piedmontlegal.com](mailto:Loretta@piedmontlegal.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 17, 2025 3:15 PM  
**To:** Fletcher Smith <[fsmith@piedmontlegal.com](mailto:fsmith@piedmontlegal.com)>; Velvet Mills <[vmills@LegalEagleInc.com](mailto:vmills@LegalEagleInc.com)>  
**Cc:** Fletcher Smith <[fsmith@bellsouth.net](mailto:fsmith@bellsouth.net)>; Transcripts <[transcripts@sccourts.org](mailto:transcripts@sccourts.org)>; info <[info@LegalEagleInc.com](mailto:info@LegalEagleInc.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

Yes! Confirmed

Thank you,

Loretta Maddox  
Legal Administrator to Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., Esq.  
112 Wakefield St. (29601)  
PO BOX 10496  
Greenville, SC 29603  
[loretta@piedmontlegal.com](mailto:loretta@piedmontlegal.com)

---

**From:** Fletcher Smith <[fsmith@piedmontlegal.com](mailto:fsmith@piedmontlegal.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 15, 2025 5:18 PM  
**To:** Velvet Mills <[vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)>  
**Cc:** Fletcher Smith <[fsmith@bellsouth.net](mailto:fsmith@bellsouth.net)>; Transcripts <[transcripts@sccourts.org](mailto:transcripts@sccourts.org)>; info <[info@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:info@legaleagleinc.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

What case is this?  
Fletcher  
Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 15, 2025, at 4:58 PM, Velvet Mills <[vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)> wrote:

Fletcher,

Today, Legal Eagle was assigned your transcript request in the above referenced matter. Based upon our review of the records, it appears this transcript will be approximately 120 pages long. The following was indicated on the request from:

- Standard Delivery (60 Days)
- PDF/Email Requested

The estimated standard delivery cost for this transcript is \$510.00.

*Please note that the page estimate is not guaranteed. The price indicated above is an approximation based on the audio length. The actual cost and page count may vary due to*

several factors including but not limited to speech rate, side bars, Q&A v Colloquy, and hearing type. A final invoice will be sent when the transcript is completed.

**Please include any attorneys who were present at each hearing and who they represented with your confirmation as the attorneys are not always introduced in the audio.**

Once you have authorized us to proceed by responding to this email, we will place your transcript inline for production with a 60-day due date, although transcripts are usually completed much earlier. If you have any questions, please let us know.

Thank you,

<image001.png>**Velvet Mills**

Transcript Manager | Legal Eagle

**M** (864) 325-5486 | **P** (864) 467-1373

**E** [vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)

107 LeGrand Blvd., Greenville, SC  
29607

[www.LegalEagleInc.com](http://www.LegalEagleInc.com)

<image002.png>

<image003.png>

<image004.png>

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# **EXHIBIT 7**

## **Delivery of Completed Transcript and Invoice No. 109076**

January 5, 2026, 8:47 AM

*Email from Velvet Mills to Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., transmitting the completed certified transcript of the proceeding in Sylvester Jackson, et al. v. Charles Bennie Smith, et al., Docket No. 2019-CP-23-06363, together with Invoice No. 109076.*

Attached to Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

## Fletcher Smith

---

**From:** Velvet Mills <vmills@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 5, 2026 8:47 AM  
**To:** fsmith@bellsouth.net  
**Cc:** info; Transcripts  
**Subject:** Completed Transcript: Jackson vs Smith  
**Attachments:** 6.20.25\_2019-CP-23-06363 SYLVESTER JACKSON, ET AL v CHARLES BENNIE SMITH, ET AL.pdf; Invoice 109076.pdf

Fletcher,

Attached are the transcript and invoice for the above referenced matter. If you have any questions after the review of the transcript, please let us know. We would be happy to revisit any concerns.

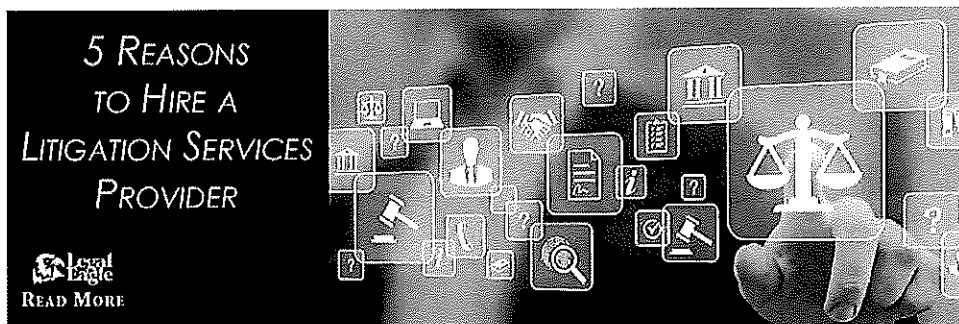
Thank you,



**Velvet Mills**  
Transcript Manager | Legal Eagle

**M** (864) 325-5486 | **P** (864) 467-1373  
**E** [vmills@legaleagleinc.com](mailto:vmills@legaleagleinc.com)

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Defendants.

**AND**

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Respondents,

v.

**CHARLES "BENNIE" SMITH, ROBIN SMITH, LARRY DAWKINS, MABLE DAWKINS, JIMMY DAVIS, BRENDA DAVIS, DOROTHY THOMASON, L.C. THOMASON, and JAMES SIMS,**

Appellants.

# **EXHIBIT 8**

## **Legal Eagle, Inc. Payment Inquiry**

February 12, 2026, 10:19 AM

*Email from Kevin Dehlinger, Director of Operations, Legal Eagle, Inc., to Loretta Maddox and Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., advising that payment had not yet been received for Invoice No. 109076 and requesting information as to when payment might be made.*

Attached to Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

## Fletcher Smith

---

**From:** Loretta Maddox  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 12, 2026 3:33 PM  
**To:** info; Fletcher Smith  
**Cc:** Fletcher Smith; Transcripts; Adam Shirley  
**Subject:** Re: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

Kevin,

Could I please get the date of this deposition?

Thank you,

Loretta Maddox  
Legal Administrator to Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., Esq.  
112 Wakefield St. (29601)  
PO BOX 10496  
Greenville, SC 29603  
loretta@piedmontlegal.com

---

**From:** info <info@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 12, 2026 10:19 AM  
**To:** Loretta Maddox <Loretta@piedmontlegal.com>; Fletcher Smith <fsmith@piedmontlegal.com>  
**Cc:** Fletcher Smith <fsmith@bellsouth.net>; Transcripts <transcripts@sccourts.org>; Adam Shirley <AShirley@LegalEagleInc.com>  
**Subject:** RE: Transcript Request: Jackson vs Smith

Loretta,

Hope you are doing well. We have not yet received payment for this invoice. Could you look into it for us and when it might be paid? Thank you.



**Kevin Dehlinger**  
Director of Operations

M (864) 444-4219 | P (864) 467-1373  
E kdehlinger@legaleagleinc.com

107 LeGrand Blvd., Greenville, SC 29607  
www.LegalEagleInc.com



**THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In The Court of Appeals**

**Appeal From Greenville County  
In The Court Of Common Pleas**

**Patrick C. Fant III Circuit Court Judge**

Docket No.: 202110318 CASE ID. NUMBER 3049442

Appellate Case No. 2025-001623

**ENOREE FORK BAPTIST CHURCH**

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vs.

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Defendants.

**AND**

**SYLVESTER JACKSON, KAREN ROBINSON, MICHAEL ROBINSON, DOROTHY WILLIAMS, JOHN WOODFOLK, ERNEST "TERRY" MURRAY, DONALD COX, TIMOTHY MCBEE, DERRICK COX, REGINALD JACKSON, WILLIE FOSTER, CYNTHIA ROBINSON, ZELMA BROWN, TELEK COBB, SARAH THOMASON, and THURSHIA JAMISON-JACKSON,**

Respondents,

v.

**CHARLES "BENNIE" SMITH, ROBIN SMITH, LARRY DAWKINS, MABLE DAWKINS, JIMMY DAVIS, BRENDA DAVIS, DOROTHY THOMASON, L.C. THOMASON, and JAMES SIMS,**

Appellants.

# **EXHIBIT 9**

## **Response to Payment Inquiry**

February 12, 2026, 3:33 PM

*Email from Loretta Maddox to Kevin Dehlinger and Legal Eagle, Inc.,  
responding to the payment inquiry and requesting the date of the deposition  
reflected in the transcript in order to assist in processing the payment.*

Attached to Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.

**RECEIVED**

**Apr 06 2026**

**SC Court of Appeals**

**FLETCHER N. SMITH, JR., ESQ.**  
FLETCHER N. SMITH ATTORNEY AT LAW, LLC  
112 Wakefield Street  
P.O. Box 10496  
Greenville, South Carolina 29603  
Telephone: (864) 232-6541

March 27, 2026

***VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL AND ELECTRONIC FILING***

Catherine S. Harrison  
Chief Deputy Clerk  
The South Carolina Court of Appeals  
Post Office Box 11629  
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

**Re:** Sylvester Jackson v. Charles "Bennie" Smith  
Appellate Case No. 2025-001623  
**Reply to Respondents' Return to Motion to Reinstate Appeal**

Dear Ms. Harrison:

On March 27, 2026, Appellants filed their Motion to Reinstate Appeal in the above-referenced matter. On April 6, 2026, Respondents filed their Return to Motion to Reinstate Appeal. Please find enclosed for filing Appellants' Reply to Respondents' Return, together with the supporting Affidavit and Proof of Service, as follows:

1. Reply to Respondents' Return to Motion to Reinstate Appeal;
2. Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., with Exhibits 1 through 9; and
3. Proof of Service.

The enclosed Reply responds to the four arguments raised in Respondents' Return. The Reply establishes that undersigned counsel did not receive the Clerk's December 16, 2025 letter,

that the transcript was not delivered until January 5, 2026 (after the deadline in that letter had already expired), that the jurisdictional defects in the underlying orders survive any procedural default, and that the party actually prejudiced by these proceedings is Enoree Fork Baptist Church, the non-party religious entity ordered to act without ever being made a party, served with process, or given an opportunity to be heard. The accompanying Affidavit of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., provides the sworn evidentiary support that Respondents specifically requested in their Return, including the full chronology of communications with Legal Eagle, Inc., regarding the transcript.

Copies of the enclosed Reply, Affidavit, and Proof of Service have been served upon all counsel of record by electronic mail and first-class mail as indicated in the Proof of Service.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information.

Very truly yours,

s/Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.  
**FLETCHER N. SMITH, JR., ESQ.**  
S.C. Bar No.: 5165

**Enclosures (3)**

cc: Rustin Bryce Duncan, Esquire  
Garrett Miller Simpson, Esquire  
Patrick Ian Toomey, Esquire