

# *News Release*

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## **Berkeley County man sentenced to 30 years in prison for robbing woman in St Stephen church**

**Moncks Corner, S.C.** – After deliberating for less than two hours, a Berkeley County Jury found defendant Benjamin Jackson, III, guilty of Armed Robbery, Kidnapping, Burglary 2<sup>nd</sup> degree, Grand Larceny, Possession of a Firearm During Commission of Violent Crime, and Failure to Stop for Blue Lights. The charges stemmed from a robbery that took place inside the St Stephen Evangelical Church May 18, 2010. Circuit Court Judge J.C. Nicholson sentenced Jackson to the maximum sentence on each charge: 30 years for the Armed Robbery and Kidnapping, 15 years on the Burglary 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10 years for the Grand Larceny, 5 years for the Possession of Firearm during Commission of Violent Crime, and 3 years on the Failure to Stop for Blue Lights. The sentences will be served concurrently. The case was prosecuted by Deputy Solicitor Bryan Alfaro and Assistant Solicitor Ariel Pitman.

During the three day trial, the victim testified that she was cleaning inside the St Stephen Evangelical Church on May 18, 2010, at approximately 9:30 a.m, when Jackson entered the church armed with a rifle or shotgun, pointed the weapon in the victim's face and threatened to "blow her head off" unless she gave him her keys and cell phone. When she complied, Jackson ordered her to lie face down in the kitchen area of the church, at which time he fled the scene in the victim's 2006 Ford Expedition.

Ten days later, Jackson was spotted driving the stolen SUV in Moncks Corner midnight by a Captain with the Berkeley County Sheriff's Office, who attempted to stop the stolen SUV. Jackson initially stopped, but then sped off as deputies were approaching the SUV. He led them on a high speed pursuit through Moncks Corner and into St Stephen, covering approximately 27 miles before he crashed into a parked car and ran from the scene. While officers were unable to catch him that night, they discovered had left his wallet inside the stolen SUV when he ran away. Numerous items belonging to the victim were later found inside Jackson's home, including the SUV's owners' manual, vehicle registration, a prescription pill bottle, GPS unit, and a personal check filled out by the victim. In addition, in Jackson's backyard they found other personal papers belonging to the victim, a luggage rack that had been removed from the roof of the SUV, and a palmetto tree emblem that Jackson had removed from the rear of the SUV.

Jackson was questioned by police after the stolen property was found in and around his home. He told them he was sorry for what he did to the victim and that he just wanted the victim's vehicle. He would not tell them where he got the firearm he used, or what he had done with it.

Alfaro said that the Berkeley County Sheriff's Office and St. Stephen Police Department worked on the case, and their effort ultimately helped with the successful prosecution.

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