



# PRESS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Groundbreaking held for new chapel at South Mississippi Correctional Institution**

Leakesville – State and local elected officials joined by prison authorities and a group of religious volunteers took part Monday morning in a ceremonial ground breaking for a new chapel facility at South Mississippi Correctional Institution (SMCI). The new building, which will house the Chaplains' Department, will also include classroom space for a literacy program at the Greene County prison.

“We are extremely pleased that work can now begin on this new facility,” said Mississippi Department of Corrections Commissioner Robert L. Johnson adding, “the Chaplaincy plays a vital role of ministering to the spiritual needs of our offender population.” The new facility, whose design was donated by architects Fred Wagner of Bay St. Louis and Larry Albert of Hattiesburg, will be located in Area I at SMCI. The chapel's development is being made possible totally through contributions from businesses, churches, and private donations. The Chapel Building Committee members include W.A. Hanberry and Dr. Lynn B. McMahan, Hattiesburg and Reverend Patricia Garrison of Moss Point.

W.A. Hanberry, Chapel Building Committee member of Hattiesburg, noted at the groundbreaking that the Chapel Building Committee was gratified to see the beginning development of the new chapel. He stated, “Our committee has worked many long, hard hours raising funds for this day. Our vision is evolving into a reality.” Mr. Hanberry continued, “The new facility's eventual completion will provide a proper setting for Sister Kathleen Spurlin, Director of SMCI's Chaplains' Department and her staff along with the assistance of religious volunteers to minister to the spiritual needs of offenders. Its timely completion will provide critically needed space to operate a literacy program, which is of paramount importance in the process to rehabilitate offenders by prison officials.”

The groundbreaking ceremony on Monday marked the culmination of nearly 10 years of effort by the Chapel Building Committee. The committee members state that additional funds will have to be raised to fully develop and equip the new facility. The new chapel when completed will replace SMCI's gymnasium which has served as Area I's chapel since the prison first opened in April 1989. Future plans include developing a smaller chapel at Area II that currently holds its chapel services in the prison's visiting facility.

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Media note: If you would like a picture of the groundbreaking, e-mail Bill Greenleaf at: [bgreenleaf@mdoc.state.ms.us](mailto:bgreenleaf@mdoc.state.ms.us) or call him at (601) 359-5646.

