

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS  
Secretary Gary Westcott

Date: January 21, 2026

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## Women's Correctional Facility Host Chapel Dedication Ceremony

*Event featured multiple interdenominational faith-based organizations, music, praise, and hope*

St. Gabriel, LA – Today at noon, leaders from the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections along with state officials, volunteers, and numerous members of the faith-based community gathered for a chapel dedication ceremony at Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) to celebrate the opening of the new sanctuary.

"We dedicate this chapel because it is more than just a building but also a place where the residents and volunteers come to praise, worship, find solitude and form both their intellect and spirit," said LCIW Chaplain Tim Messenger. "This chapel is a symbol of unity reflected even in religious diversity of hope in God's eternal promises of love, in how we serve and potential for the possibilities that can be. It is their spiritual home during their time at LCIW."

The newly constructed chapel, which was completed in December 2025, is roughly 9,425 square feet. The sanctuary features a large stage area, small kitchen, storage space, classrooms for seminary classes, a computer lab, restrooms, and a conference room. The chapel can accommodate around 400 people and will be used primarily for praise and worship. Additionally, the space will host faith-based programs, graduations, performances, and meetings. The building also includes office spaces to accommodate up to five chapel staff members, an assistant chaplain and chaplain.

"This new physical structure offers a spiritual purpose and space to glorify God through scripture, prayer and the lives that will enter inside these walls," said Warden Kristen Thomas. "Everyone who played a role in bringing this facility to fruition for the benefit of women who are incarcerated here along with the chaplains and myself are looking forward to seeing the spiritual growth and outreach that will transpire in this sacred place."

The chapel is the final building to be constructed on the grounds of the LCIW campus, which is the state's only female multi-level security correctional facility, reopened in August 2025. LCIW is located west of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center in St. Gabriel. LCIW Warden Kristen Thomas has served in the role since December 2021 and she is responsible for the facility's daily operations, management, and oversight of 261 employees and the 926 women who are housed there.

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