

Brown is New Chief of Pastoral Services

J. Michael “Mike” Brown is the South Carolina Department of Corrections’ new Chief of Pastoral Services. Chaplain Brown, most recently the Senior Pastor at Broad River Correctional Institution, assumed his duties in charge of all chaplains at SCDC’s 24 institutions on March 2, 2016.



Chaplain Brown has over 41 years of experience in the ministry, having served as a Southern Baptist church pastor, a hostage negotiator, an industrial chaplain, a hospital, and U.S. Army chaplain. He has also worked as a correctional chaplain for over 40 years. Chaplain Brown actually began that career at the old Central Correctional Institution as a Student Summer Missionary coming from his alma mater, Wofford College. Chaplain Brown also was a member of the Army Reserve from 1972 until he retired as a Colonel in 2009 serving in several postings throughout the Southeast. He also served for over five years in several different military communities in Germany and ministered to many soldiers who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Chaplain Brown says he still keeps a list of the 110 soldiers who died from the units he served.

Chaplain Brown came to the Department of Corrections full-time in 1976 to serve as Clinical Chaplain at CCI in Columbia. It was there that he led the effort to build a chapel in Cellblock Two for Death Row Inmates to have worship services. He later served as Clinical Chaplain at the Women’s Correctional Center (now Camille Griffin Graham CI) from 1979-1987. Chaplain Brown was hired as Broad River CI’s first chaplain in 1987, before the then new facility had even opened. Through his time at BRCI, he has ministered to 29 men who faced execution at the Capital Punishment Facility located on the grounds. He says he has also done his share of notifications and funeral services. “Life is fragile, and it’s been my task to strengthen and encourage people to face their reality,” says Brown. “It’s the only way that they can be at peace and do the work they need to do.”



Chaplain Brown takes pride in the successful effort he led in raising \$330,000 for the construction of the institutional chapel at Broad River CI in December, 2000. That facility is recognized as one of the best of its kind in the correctional system. He has since helped several other SCDC institutions in similar efforts.

Another source of pride for Chaplain Brown has been his role as a hostage negotiator, serving as a Captain in SITCON, The Department of Corrections' nationally recognized hostage negotiation crisis response team. During his 28 years as a part of this team, he has been a part of negotiations during many crucial situations at BRCI, Lee CI, Lieber CI and others. "All of our team members try their best to uphold the SITCON motto 'Preserve Life' ", said Brown. Fortunately, we have been very successful in achieving peaceful resolutions during some very difficult and dangerous situations."

Chaplain Brown also likes to point out the unique opportunity he and others have in supervising religious programming for an interfaith setting that includes Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Wiccans, Hindus, Buddhists, Seventh Day Adventists, Rastafarians, Jehovah's Witnesses and more. "Very few pastors have the experience we do in prisons with all kinds of religions," observed Chaplain Brown. "The transitional impact of faith is so important to me. It is a delight."



Brown admits that taking on the role of Chief Chaplain at SCDC was not really something he had aspired to, but does believe it was something God called him to do at this time. He does admit that prison ministry has had a great impact on his life. “Christ calls us to love, not judge,” states Brown. “I believe that there is no question that a faith and a faith community help a person grow positively through their time in a correctional system.”