

## **AN EXTRAORDINARY PARTNERSHIP**

In 2004, something quite extraordinary took place in the Kingdom's work. Mississippi Baptists partnered with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the Mississippi Department of Corrections to offer a four year fully accredited college degree program as a model program in moral rehabilitation at the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman. Through generous gifts to the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering and the sending of seminary trained pastors and educators, this program has grown each year.

In May 2020, the 98th inmate graduated since the beginning of the Extension Center in 2004. These graduates are serving other prisoners as Inmate Religious Assistants in the Chaplaincy Department of the Mississippi Department of Corrections System. Even during their training, they are offering hope to individuals who desperately need to know they can face tomorrow.

From the day the inmates begin their studies, lives are impacted by the Extension Center at Parchman.

One inmate explains, "As a new student, this program has made a tremendous difference in my life. From the very moment I was accepted into the program until the beginning of my first semester, the time spent in this class has not only been exceptional, but also a blessing. During the 13 years I've been incarcerated, I've never had the sense of family or felt love like I have in this school and for this, I am truly grateful".

A fourth year student reflects on his time in the school. "...I had no life before this school took me in. Now I have eternal life and a home with Jesus in the kingdom of Heaven."

Another student declares, "When trouble or death of family happens, they [inmates outside the school] come to students of the school for prayer, talk, and to be lifted up out of hurt and sorrow. They depend on students of the school to be their prayer warriors."

Thank you Mississippi Baptists for the eternal investment you are making in the lives of your incarcerated brothers at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman!

Dr. Jim Burke, M.Div., D.Min.  
Director, Faith Based Initiative, MSP  
Parchman Extension, Leavell College  
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary