



MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
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# PRESS RELEASE

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## Christian Ministry Program at Parchman Celebrates Seven Years

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**Parchman** – In its seventh year, the Christian Ministry program at the Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP) Extension Center at Parchman has graduated 35 men with bachelor degrees in Christian Ministry.

With support from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the program currently has 78 inmates enrolled in the curriculum. This program gives inmates an opportunity to improve their lives as spiritual leaders and provides the tools needed to successfully re-enter society. It not only benefits the incarcerated graduates, it also benefits the prison population with spiritual ministry.

The state's first class of inmates to earn Christian Ministry Bachelor Degrees graduated in May 2009. "Working towards a bachelor's degree while incarcerated provides higher education and rehabilitation for our inmates," said MDOC Commissioner Chris Epps. "This significant achievement gives these inmates an opportunity to improve their lives as spiritual leaders and provides them tools needed to successfully re-enter society. This program not only benefits the incarcerated graduates, it also benefits our prison population, who will be the recipients of their ministry."

The Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP) Extension Center is an arm of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is supported in partnership with Christians in Mississippi through the cooperation of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Candidates for the Bachelor of Arts degree must satisfactorily complete the five-year faith-based program which is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The MSP faith-based center's mission is to train church leaders and other inmate ministers for prison ministry. The goal is to provide leaders who will have an influence on their culture and who will help to improve the lives of those who live around them. Eligibility requirements include membership of local church, high school graduate or GED, letter of recommendation from pastor, written statement of religious experience, and eligibility according to MSP guidelines.

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