

# Former Angola inmate Hyde, a new man in Christ, takes on Parchman ministry

Parchman, Miss. (Special) – Convicted killer Robert Hyde was granted parole from the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola in March 2022, and his miracle of salvation while there continues as he now makes disciples for Christ among inmates at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

In his role as program supervisor at Parchman, Hyde oversees more than 300 men who are taking vocational classes, adult basic education, courses from Mississippi Delta Community College in Moorhead, career services, book clubs via Zoom from the Mississippi Library Commission and Jackson State University, and New Orleans Seminary Extension Center studies.

He also is an adjunct professor at the New Orleans Seminary Extension Center.



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“This partnership is funded through the generosity of Mississippi Baptists as they give to the Margaret Lackey Offering,” he said.

“Over the years, we have had a few different directors of that Extension Center and now we welcome Robert Hyde as the new director,” Martin said. “Robert brings a unique skill set to this position as he has personal experience and understands the value of the program.”

Hyde, who began working at Parchman in July 2022, said his new role is a way for him to give back to those who helped turn his life around while as an inmate.

“It feels right to be here doing this,” Hyde said. “This is exactly where I am supposed to be, which is helping guys. I finally get to be for these guys what other men were for me at Angola. It’s the ultimate way to give back.”

Hyde grew up in Baton Rouge, La., with an abusive stepfather, and domestic violence eventually led to his mother’s death from a gunshot wound. He then went to live with his grandfather, whose aloof attitude left Hyde with no parental leadership.

This led to a life of drugs, alcohol, and the occult that eventually culminated in the 2001 killing of a man at a party in Rayville, La., when Hyde was 28 years old.

While in Richland Parish Detention Center in Rayville, the Holy Spirit brought him under conviction and Hyde turned to Christ in his cell.

Two years later, Hyde was given a 35-year sentence for manslaughter and transferred to the Louisiana Department of Corrections. At Winn and Dixon correctional centers, Hyde began to lead Bible studies and eventually learned of an opportunity to transfer to Angola, enrolling in 2012 for classes with New Orleans Seminary Extension.

Hyde earned associate, bachelor, and master’s degrees with the extension program. He was called as associate pastor of Grace Church inside the Angola prison in 2015. Later that year, Washington Association in Franklinton, La., unanimously voted to accept the congregation into its fellowship.

Hyde was ordained by Grace Church in 2017. He served in that role until 2019, when he succeeded Paul Will as senior pastor.

Hyde spent the final two years of his time in Angola helping to establish a Christian-based substance abuse recovery program. Using the Celebrate Recovery model, Hyde witnessed 150 inmates turn from drug addictions to changed lives with

Jesus.

Several Mississippi pastors and staff had the opportunity to accompany Martin on a visit to Parchman on August 1.

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“My prayer is that the chapel in this unit, Unit 30, will be completed sooner rather than later. I can’t wait to see how God continues to work and receive glory in an almost forgotten place.”

Ryan Reed, senior pastor of First Church, Bruce, said, “Jesus once told his disciples, ‘I was in jail and you visited me.’ The work that Mississippi Baptists are funding in our prison system is the epitome of Jesus’ call to minister to the least

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“I would encourage every Mississippi Baptist to leverage the resources Christ has given us to support this Gospel effort,” Reed said.

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“Being in the classroom with these guys and getting to talk to them helped me to see the hope that some of them have regained. In spite of their situations, many of them were studying to show themselves approved and striving to be faithful right where God has them,” Vowell said.

Burl Cain, the former warden at Angola who started the seminary program there in 1995 and is currently commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Corrections, encouraged Hyde to apply for the position he now holds at Parchman.

Hyde said New Orleans Seminary was instrumental in preparing him for his new role. Securing his release from Angola and landing the ministry job at Parchman have been tremendous gifts from God, he said, and added that reconciling with three of his four daughters since coming to accept Jesus has been a

special blessing for Him.

When he entered prison in 2001, Hyde already knew two of his daughters who were seven and nine years old at the time and through the years maintained ongoing conversations with them. He later learned he had a third daughter whose adoptive parents finally agreed, 14 years after he entered Angola, that she could meet Hyde in 2016.

Once he was released, Hyde was reunited with his two oldest daughters in Baton Rouge. In December, he met his youngest daughter for the first time in Monroe, La. Hyde is praying that one day he will be able to reconcile with her.

Despite the crime he committed, Hyde said his daughters have shown unconditional love. "If you are a parent and you have done something stupid, you know what it's like to experience the deep forgiveness of a child," he said.

"There is something in the forgiveness from a child that is so pure because you know there is no ulterior motive. When you mess up as badly as I did, forgiveness is the one metric you have to verify you are back on even ground with your relationships," he said.

"I have learned there is nothing more important, besides Jesus, than your blood and your Christian family," he stressed. "I took that for granted before I knew Jesus. Now I can appreciate it and I will never take it for granted again."

Hyde asked for continued prayers as he ministers to Mississippi's prison inmates. He may be contacted at [rhyde@mdoc.state.ms.us](mailto:rhyde@mdoc.state.ms.us).

*Authors of this article are Bryan Blackwell, staff writer for The Baptist Message, news journal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, in Alexandria, La, and Tony Martin, associate editor of The Baptist Record. For more information on Mississippi Baptist prison ministries, contact Jon Martin at*

*[jmartin@mbcb.org](mailto:jmartin@mbcb.org)*