



March 30, 2026

CMCF Easter banquet delivers 'Full bellies, Full Hearts'

PEARL – Near Life Experience and Sovereign Grace Church hosted an Easter banquet at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility (CMCF) on Sunday, March 29, for inmates and their family members.

The event welcomed 187 inmates who maintain consistent church attendance. Each inmate was permitted to invite up to three family members to join them for the service, a catered lunch, and an extended visitation period. A total of 136 family members attended, bringing the banquet's total attendance to 323 people.

Benjamin Darras, a lifer who serves as a field minister and pastor of Near Life Experience, welcomed families to the facility. Darras emphasized the vital role of family support and challenged inmates to return to their loved ones as transformed individuals. Dalton Shoemake, pastor of Sovereign Grace, delivered a sermon on Passion Week. The Field Minister Band also gave a surprise performance.

Jim Sparks of First Baptist Church of Jackson was the keynote speaker. Sparks oversees the church's prison ministry outreach at CMCF.

The day concluded with a meal of hoagies, potato salad, and chips provided by First Baptist of Jackson and Crossgates Church.

"It was a good day," Supt. Matt Reynolds said.

Supt. Reynolds attended along with Deputy Superintendent Denise Bone, Area II Warden Mario Grady, and Chaplain Director Sandra Perow.

One family member said the event was their first time visiting their loved one in prison. In the past, the thought of coming to the prison was too intimidating, but the person said knowing they were attending a service made them feel more comfortable.

Organizers noted that the event allowed families to spend quality time together, leaving participants with both "full bellies and full hearts."

