

600-plus turn to Christ during Rick Gage Crusade

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ANDERSON, S.C. (GO TELL Ministries) -- Stories of God's grace continue to surface well after the Tri-County GO TELL Crusade held in Anderson County, S.C.

Community obstacles were overcome as more than 30 churches in the county agreed to support the crusade, which brought evangelist Rick Gage from Atlanta and guest speakers and musicians. The four-night crusade was held May 20-23 at Belton-Honea Path High School's football stadium, concluding with a Pizza Blast and Youth Night. At 12 schools, ON TRACK assemblies were presented by Gage and his team to 6,000 students Monday through Wednesday on the dangers of sex, alcohol and drug abuse. Gage also brought with him a BMX bike team to entertain the students.

"We had an awesome event with more than 15,000 in total attendance and over 1,300 decisions with 618 of those for salvation. It was one of our greatest crusades ever! To God be the glory!" Gage said.

"I met one couple with a small child who had been separated and were on the verge of divorce; but as result of the crusade and the power of God, their marriage and family were brought back together," Gage added.

"This is a story that needs to be told. A great movement of God took place here in Anderson County," said Dennis Ashley, who co-chaired the crusade with Tom Langston. At Barker's Creek Baptist Church in Honea Path, Ashley said, "We have had 12 come forward for baptism."

Members from area churches comprised the 155-person Mass Choir. On the first night, more than 3,000 attended with many churches suspending their Sunday evening worship services to encourage their members to attend the crusade instead. On the last night, more than 6,000 attended – in spite of thunderstorms both Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

Prayer Committee Chairman Betty Mitchell said, "I don't think I've ever seen a movement of God quite so powerful. All I can say is God showed up and showed us His power! When His people come together in agreement and pray, He moves in a mighty way."

For instance, Mitchell said, "The weather was doubtful at times but would clear off when the crusade began. I know my preacher made a comment about it raining across the street but not at the crusade one night.

"People came, people shared their hearts; and God heard and answered all our prayers. I feel honored to have been a part of such a movement of God. To Him be all the glory. Great things He has done!"

Among Mitchell's Prayer Committee members was Evelyn Ashley, saying, "I was disappointed that we only got six cottage prayer meetings from our church but overwhelmed when 91 people agreed to pray every day." Ashley said daily and weekly prayer cells met, and now one daily and one weekly prayer group continue to meet. On the Sunday morning following the crusade, she said her pastor asked those who had been involved in the crusade to share their experiences. "We had two hours of public testimony of experiences at the crusade," she said.

Then this past Sunday morning, Ashley said 10 people were baptized and at least five more will be baptized next Sunday morning. "People are continuing to visit every day. In the past, getting people to visit once a month was impossible," she added.

"Pray for the enthusiasm to continue and for follow-up of those who made decisions during the crusade," Ashley said. "Praise God for people like the Go Tell Team."

Ted Coody, senior pastor of Honea Path Pentecostal Holiness Church, said, "What thrilled me most about the Go Tell Crusade was to see the Body of Christ come together in unity – regardless of the wide range of denominational affiliations – out of mutual concern for lost souls and with great passion to reach them for Christ. The souls reached through this effort, I believe, are just the beginning of a greater harvest as we continue to advance His kingdom cause together!"

By the second Sunday following the crusade, Rev. Coody said, "We had baptized 10 new believers – most of whom were brought to Christ through the Tri-County GO TELL Crusade effort! We are committed to disciple these who are a part of our congregation and will continue reaching out to win others to Him."

"I will never forget the excitement of seeing souls hungry for God falling on their faces on the wet field, following a thunderstorm prior to the service! What an awesome sight to witness the Holy Spirit, convicting and drawing souls to Christ for salvation or into a deeper walk of faith with Him! Praise God for great things He has done and greater things He will still do for those who believe on Him."

Helen Watson, a teacher at Honea Path Middle School, said, "There was something wonderful that happened at the crusade and then at my school a week following the crusade. These things were not just a blessing for the students but a blessing for me that has renewed my faith and has me walking a closer walk with the Lord."

One regarded a student for whom Watson had been burdened, and the other dealt with carnations.

Watson said this student "was so filled with anger that I wasn't able to get through to her." Attending the crusade on Monday night, Watson was struck by similarities between this student and the testimony of the crusade's guest speaker. Then she saw the student sitting alone. Seeing her lift her hand to say she was not sure of her salvation, Watson said she struggled for several minutes, wondering if she should join the student. Although she had prayed for this student many times, Watson said she did not feel she had a strong relationship with her and did not want to make her feel uncomfortable.

Then Watson "felt something like a gentle push on my back. I even turned around to see if someone had touched me." Continuing to feel "a heaviness on my back, urging me to go forward," she concluded this pressure must be from the Lord. Watson decided she would do what He was commanding "though difficult for me."

Approaching the young lady, Watson said, "She was tearful and had her head bowed in prayer. I put my arm around her; and as she looked up at me, I asked her did she want to go forward to where others were praying. She took my hand; and we walked to the front with others, went to our knees and I began to pray for her. I saw a colleague and asked them to come lay hands on her as well. When we stood, I heard her telling me softly, 'Thank you'; and she walked away."

The next day at school, Watson said she learned from another colleague that this same young lady also had attended the crusade on Sunday night and had prayed. During the week of the crusade and the week following, Watson continued to meet students in the halls who would say, "Ms. Watson, did you go to the crusade? I got saved. Ms. Watson, I went to the crusade at BHP and it was awesome."

Watson commented, "I couldn't help notice a glow on their faces." Feeling she needed to do something to help them celebrate, Watson said, "With separation of school and church, I wasn't sure what to do, so I prayed to the Lord that He would guide me."

The next week, she spent nearly \$100 for 200 white carnations to give to students wanting to tell her of the changes in their lives. Watson said she wanted to tell them that white was for purity and a sign of starting over, that they had been forgiven of their sins and cleansed, that they were blemish free.

Watson also planned on telling them that, just like we ask the Lord for forgiveness, He also expects us to ask forgiveness of those we have hurt or wronged in some way. Also, she wanted to tell them they should be proud of what they experienced at the crusade and to share what had happened with their friends and family.

However, the carnations did not come Friday or Saturday – not until the following Tuesday from another country. By then, a company official told her the flowers would be "rotten" and she would be issued a refund.

When she opened the package, Watson said, "I saw the most beautiful white carnations that I have ever seen" with only a couple with a few brown spots. "They were in full bloom and as white as snow."

She spread the word by intercom that students would be welcome to stop by her room at certain times the next day to tell her about their crusade experience – though not mentioning the carnations.

"The next day, I had students lined up at my door. As students came in, I asked them what night they went to the crusade and what their experience was like. Some said they had been saved. They talked about how they cried and prayed with their family and friends. Some said they had been saved before, but they prayed and cried for strength to handle certain situations in their lives."

Playing "Amazing Grace" by Chris Tomlin on her computer, Watson and her friend hugged each student when giving them their white carnation. Then she saw the young lady with whom she had prayed at the crusade, being urged to enter her room to receive her carnation. While she did not share her story, she did receive a flower. As she left the room, Watson heard her softly and shyly say, "Thank you."

"Another student said she had been to the crusade but wanted to talk in private about another concern. She was fearful about leaving middle school and going to high school. We talked about her fears and about the power of prayer for strength."

Then a couple of young ladies asked if they could stay and listen to all of the words to "Amazing Grace." "They not only listened but sang along. One said it had been many years since she had heard the song. One of them became very tearful. I wondered what was going on in her mind as she listened to the song. I knew she had to have a heavy burden as she is a foster child."

That day Watson said she gave out 122 of the nearly 200 white carnations. Then on the last day of school, she had a few more students come by to tell her their stories. Also on the last day of school, she received another email from the florist, promising to give her a 50 percent discount on her next order. "The Lord is good, and I praise Him."