

GO TELL evangelism crusade rocks Stephens County

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May 27, 2015

TOCCOA — Some have said that revivals or evangelistic crusades don't work anymore. Well, don't tell the folks in Stephens County. The recent GO TELL Crusade with Rick Gage was a grand success in the hearts and minds of thousands of people in the north Georgia county and elicited the glee of the angels in heaven.

Andy Childs, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Toccoa, stated, "We had some 50 churches come together for the GO TELL Crusade with thousands in attendance each night (a total of 11,000) in the Stephens County High School stadium. We also are both humbled and excited that 720 people made spiritual decisions, including 303 who made professions of faith."

Preparation and results

The Georgia Baptist Convention helped fund the evangelistic crusade and Childs noted, "As Georgia Baptists, this could be especially encouraging as all five of the Smooth Stones (Spiritual Renewal, Kingdom Generosity, Church Revitalization, Church Planting, and Authentic Evangelism) were a part of this evangelistic event. It was also wonderful as a pastor to see churches of all sizes and demographics pull together to make it such a success."

For nearly 30 years Toccoa has been the location of Gage's GO TELL Student Summer Camps at the Georgia Baptist Conference Center with two weeks of camps scheduled for late June and early July this year. Thousands of students and their leaders have received Jesus for salvation. Some of those students, now youth leaders, have returned with their students.

During the crusade, Gage used speakers Scott Camp, Adrian Despres, and Steve Payson, as well as worship leader Chuck Sullivan and guest artist Joy Fowler, to share the Gospel in testimony and song.

A global evangelist for around 25 years, Gage said, "The key to the spiritual impact we all witnessed was a result of the many months of God's people praying. Also, there were hundreds of volunteers working for nearly a year preparing for the four-day event and strong leadership who led this evangelistic effort."

Isaac White, pastor of Hurricane Grove Baptist Church and one of the Crusade's co-chairmen, explained that at least ten denominations were involved in preparing for the Crusade and more than 500 volunteers participated, beginning with the Prayer Team in November.

Billy Shaw, also one of the co-chairmen of the crusade and former Georgia Tech football player who was an offensive tackle for the Buffalo Bills from 1960 to 69, stated, "Our little town of 10,000 people will never be the same. It's certainly the talk of the town. It just couldn't have gone any better."

The only member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame who played his entire career in the American Football League, helping to lead his team to AFL titles in 1964 and 1965, Shaw said he has lived with his wife in Toccoa since 1973 and has never seen a crusade of this magnitude.

Shaw said he was asked to be one of the co-chairs by his pastor, Childs. "A group had been talking for several years about a crusade, but it wasn't until October when the Lord let them know the timing was right," Shaw observed.

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Danny Yearwood, chaplain/inmate advocate, community advocate at the Stephens County Sheriff's Office, was also a co-chairman of the Crusade. He acknowledged on his Facebook page that the crusade was changing the lives of many people in Stephens County.

Establishing evangelism

Brett Sanders, youth pastor/associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Toccoa, brought a bus of young people to the crusade and had five receive Jesus for salvation on the bus going back to the church.

As a result of the GO TELL evangelism class earlier in April, a young lady led an acquaintance to the Lord. "We got to talking, and I started sharing my testimony and witnessing to her. She was in a bad spot and started crying. She had had a few bad experiences with churches at a very young age and had carried hurt for over 35 years.

"She had never given her life to Christ. I got to lead her in the prayer of salvation! God lifted that hurt off her shoulders. It was so amazing how He spoke through me and used me. Chains were broken. Bondage that was there for so long was broken. It was an amazing experience that words can't describe."

Jim Howard, pastor of the Ark, recalled, "During the Crusade many came forward for salvation for the first time, and many Christians came to the center of the field and fell on their faces rededicating their lives to Christ. Men, women, and teens laying prostrate in the grass before God, humbling themselves as the Holy Spirit washed over them with love, forgiveness, and restoration."

Kim Finley of Broad River commented, "This GO TELL has really impacted my life. It helped me grow in my faith. The outreach helped me learn to witness. Before I was scared to, but I rededicated my life on that Sunday; and now I am not afraid to take a stand, thanks to GO TELL."