

# *The Alabama Baptist*

Evangelical crusade in Monroe County reaches across denominational lines to save souls [comment \(0\)](#)

June 9, 2016

**By Maggie Walsh**

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June 4 may have been just another Saturday for most Alabama Baptists, but for those in Monroe County the day was a reminder of what God has done.

That night, Christians from various denominations gathered together for a final celebration service under a massive tent in a Monroeville field and remembered how God had moved just a couple months prior.

And it all began with one man.

A visitor to Monroeville was meeting with Pilots for Christ, a nonprofit organization that provides air transportation for critical patients and their families, to learn more about the ministry when he requested to meet with area pastors, explained John Marks, director of missions for Bethlehem and Pine Barren Baptist associations. The visitor had a vision, a tent and the financial means to supply the tent with chairs and sound and lighting equipment.

## **'Electric' atmosphere**

His vision? To have a revival of souls the size of which the area's never seen.

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And that's exactly what happened April 10–16 — there was a “Fire in the Field” in an open track of land in the middle of Monroeville.

The Fire in the Field Crusade attracted more than 1,600 participants its first night, almost hitting the tent's seating capacity.

“The first night it was electric, really,” Marks said. “The atmosphere was just awesome. God poured His Spirit out on that meeting. It's just hard to describe.”

James Henry, pastor of Little River Baptist Church, Uriah, who served as prayer chairman on the 10-person steering committee for the crusade, agreed, saying, “God really astonished us through His power and presence each night.”

Led in music and message by Gerald Simmons, worship leader at Northside Baptist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina, and evangelist Frank Shelton, the crusade also featured a counseling tent with 80–85 counselors for anyone who accepted Christ or needed prayer following the nightly services. John Bush, of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, also was on hand to assist counselors.

## **Ministering in schools**

During the weekdays, Shelton spoke to students in area schools.

Henry said, “[Shelton] has a way with kids. The whole time he was talking the kids were hanging on his every word. I've never seen anybody be able to hold a crowd of teenagers like that.”

At Wilcox Academy, a private Christian school in Camden, 102 students prayed to receive Christ after one of Shelton's assemblies. From the assemblies and crusade altogether, 355 people accepted Christ or rededicated their lives and it's a spark that Henry believes will be fanned into a much larger flame.

“I really believe that God is starting something right now in our state and in our country and I believe that it's going to happen in our youth — those are the bulk of the people that got saved through the crusade and assemblies,” he said.

“It was definitely an amazing thing to see God just working through us to fulfill what we believe was His will through Monroe County.”

The crusade also was a unifying force for churches across denominational lines.

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“It wasn’t a Baptist thing,” Henry said. “We had all different denominations come together for one sole purpose and that was to see people come to know Christ.

“To come together like that for an event like this is crucially important for Monroe County because it kind of breaks all the barriers down. None of this would have happened had we not bathed this in prayer and asked God to bless it and unite us as one people, and that’s exactly what happened when we got under this tent.

“It wasn’t about one specific church. It was about people’s souls.”