

No walls: Tent revival sparks spirit of unity

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The sweet unity of brothers and sisters of faith was experienced by hundreds of worshipers during a community tent revival in 2014. Three pastors, representing three different Blount County churches, were impressed to plan and carry out the meeting two years ago — and its impact has been felt ever since.

At the encouragement of many who attended that revival, and with much prayer for guidance, pastors Tommy Boring, of New Providence Primitive Baptist Church, Tim Martin, of Keeble's Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, and Anthony Morgan, of Six Mile Missionary Baptist Church, are bringing this Community Tent Revival back. Services begin at 7 p.m. each night, Oct. 10-15, at Camp Trinity, 652 Mel Hall Road, Maryville. Special music will be provided throughout week by Crossroads, Grafted In, Mitch and Rita Fine, Sing-a-Long Gang, Going Home and The Kincaid Family.

Hunger for the gospel

The revival will take place at Camp Trinity in the Old Piney community. Boring said, "It's kind of off the beaten path but has some of the most beautiful scenery you've ever seen. It's got a great big lake, and the tent is set right in front of the lake with a gorgeous view of Chilhowee Mountain in the background.

"We pull an old flatbed trailer in there, and we have steps that go up to it. We have a piano, a complete sound system and lights. It works pretty well."

Boring and Morgan were involved in the 2014 tent meeting. Boring explained how that first revival came about.

"There was just three pastors in the community that felt like the Lord was leading us to come together and unify the community for the gospel's sake," he said. "So we did that, in late July in 2014. Originally we intended it for our churches but it was open to the public and we ran an advertisement in the Maryville Times. It was just one, and honestly, we didn't expect that much — but the very first night the tent was full. There was well over 300, maybe closer to 400 or 500. It was like that every night. The



Community Tent Revival begins Oct. 10

A Community Tent Revival will be held Oct. 10-15 at Camp Trinity in the Old Piney community. At the previous tent revival, pictured here in 2014, more than 300 people attended each evening.

Spirit of God was there in a wondrous way. What we really came away that week was realizing that there was a hunger in this community, in this county, for the gospel.”

United in faith

An informal survey of the crowd late that week showed that 39 different churches were represented at the revival.

“That’s really what spoke to us of the hunger — the need — in Blount County,” Boring said. “There are so many people who hunger for the gospel. These are likely just good Christian people that have their own churches — but there’s something about a tent revival, evidently, that draws them to it. When we saw that many churches, and that many different denominations, it just spoke to a need. There was all kinds of denominations there. And it was unified. Everyone was in agreement. The Spirit was free, and the Word was free. We saw souls saved and many refreshed and revived. It was just a wonderful time.

“Based on the success of the first one, we’ve been praying about another one,” he said. “We’ve just, within the last four or five months, had the liberty to start bringing it together. Tim’s joined us this year, and Keeble’s Chapel, and we’re just excited to be presenting the gospel again. It’s not about us. We want people to know that the important thing is we’re trying to lift up Jesus Christ so that others may know him. We’re just bouncing off the walls excited! It’s a wondrous event.”

The preparation has included weekly meetings where the pastors and congregations have bathed the event in prayer, Boring said. “We realize this goes way beyond three churches,” he said. “It’s not about even the churches, it’s about our community. It’s about this great place where we live, and that so many people love God and are concerned about their own people that need to be saved. We think it’s just a powerful opportunity to share the gospel.”

Martin said he became involved this time after Boring and Morgan preached a revival at Keeble’s Chapel. “We’ve become bonded together, working together,” he said. “They asked me to come in and be a part of this, and I was just excited to get to do it. I mentioned it to my church, and they said, ‘Yes, let’s do, let’s get involved with them and work with them and help.’ I’m just thrilled to death to be able to share the best news I’ve ever heard in my life and lift up our wonderful Lord. ... We’re ready to go. We’re ready to work for the cause of this revival, for our community. We just felt encouraged by the Holy Spirit to get involved in it when I was asked. I never turn down an opportunity to preach, I don’t care where it’s at. I love to tell about Jesus ... That’s our mission as a church, to go out in the highways and hedges and compel them to come in. So here we are. We’re waiting on the Lord now. He’ll take care of the rest of it.”

No barriers

Morgan said he and Boring have been praying since the end of the previous tent revival for guidance on having another one.

“We saw the need and the desire of our community, just wanting something like this,” he said. “Just to

come together, tear down all the other barriers and lift up Christ. That's what we did, and what we're looking to do again. It's not about a denomination or a certain church, it's about lifting Christ up. ... We wanted to do this last year but we just didn't feel like it was time."

As Morgan and Boring were leading revival services at Keeble's Chapel and at Red Top, they received confirmation that the time had come for another tent revival.

"The Lord was working in both our hearts individually about this, and one night we were driving up to Red Top and we began to talk about it," Morgan said. "There was a gentleman up at Red Top, and he had been praying about it. That's kind of how everything got started. We got to praying about it, definitely could see the need of it. Last time, this helped every church that was involved in this. It encouraged every church, it encouraged every pastor. We saw revival spread from that tent to each individual churches. We look around and we see that's what we're in need of. We need a touch of God everywhere that we are.

"God has led in every bit of this," he said. "If we'd tried to do this on our own last year, I believe it'd have been a mess. But the Holy Spirit has led people to help and donate and bring things together. As Tommy said, we're bouncing off the walls ready to get going. We want to lift Christ up. We want to see people hear the gospel, maybe for the first time. Maybe many times they've heard it but this is the time that will really grip their heart."

Boring said, "That's what's interesting about a tent revival. Some will come that won't go in a church. ... The four walls seem to be a barrier to some. Even when we have a revival in our church, there's not that kind of participation, not even close. But then you set up a tent and the same churches come together, and it's enormous. It's fascinating that many people respond to a tent. There's something about it."

Martin agreed, saying, "I think it's like being out in the nature that God created. They see that instead of the four walls. It's an open atmosphere, and they don't feel bumped together. The air is different, the feeling out there of the natural things is different."

Everyone is invited to attend the services. "Come ready to worship," Boring said. "There's no agenda — only to lift up Jesus Christ. It's a powerful thing to be a part of."

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