

together

WE PRAY. WE GIVE. WE GO.



STANDING FIRM TOGETHER: Pray, Give, and Go for Tennessee Missions

Theme Verse: Philippians 1:27b | Story: Nehemiah 4

GOTM 2026 - 125th Anniversary

INTRODUCTION

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, two ordinary Tennessee Baptists - W.C. and Mildred Golden - had a simple, extraordinary conviction: that God's people, standing together, could reach their neighbors with the gospel. From that conviction, the Golden Offering for Tennessee Missions was born.

Today, as we celebrate that 125th anniversary, the invitation hasn't changed. We are still called to stand firm - together - for the sake of the gospel across Tennessee.

The Apostle Paul captured it in a single, sweeping sentence:

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel." Philippians 1:27b (NIV)

That word "striving" is an athletic image - like teammates pressing forward in the same direction, shoulder to shoulder. That is exactly what the Golden Offering calls us to do: Pray together. Give together. Go together.

THE BIBLICAL STORY: THE PEOPLE HAD A MIND TO WORK

Nehemiah 4:6, 15-17

"So we built the wall...for the people had a mind to work." Nehemiah 4:6

If you want a picture of what it looks like to stand firm together for something that matters, look at the people of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah.

The city's walls had lain in ruins for more than a century - a visible symbol of shame, vulnerability, and broken community. When Nehemiah heard of it, he wept, prayed, and then moved. He went to Jerusalem, surveyed the rubble in the night, and then gathered the people with a bold call: "Let us rise up and build."

And here is the remarkable thing. They didn't wait for a small group of professionals to do it for them. Priests, merchants, goldsmiths, performers, families and leaders - each one took responsibility for a section of the wall nearest to their own home. The work was shared. The burden was distributed. Everyone had a part.

But they also faced fierce opposition. Enemies mocked them, threatened them, and plotted to stop them. And Nehemiah's response was both practical and spiritual:

"From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bow, and coats of mail...each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other." Nehemiah 4:16-17

They prayed. They gave of their labor and resources. They went - each to their own section, their own community, their own responsibility before God. And in fifty-two days, what a century of neglect had left in ruins was restored.



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Why? “For the people had a mind to work.” They were united in spirit. They were striving - side by side - for something bigger than themselves.

Sound familiar? That is Philippians 1:27.

PART ONE: PRAY - THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING

Before Nehemiah picked up a single stone, he prayed. Chapter 1 is almost entirely prayer - confession, adoration, petition, surrender. Prayer wasn't an afterthought before the real work began. Prayer was the first work.

The same is true for Tennessee missions. Every church that partners with the Golden Offering, every church planter, every community being transformed by the gospel - it begins with someone, somewhere, on their knees.

This week of prayer is not a warm-up to the offering. It is the offering. When you pray for our missionaries, you are releasing power that no dollar amount can buy. You are inviting the Holy Spirit into places where no human strategy can reach.

When we stand firm in one spirit, we start by praying with one spirit. The church that prays together for the lost in Tennessee is already doing mission work.

Application: Commit this week to pray specifically - by name and by place - for the people your church supports through the Golden Offering. Post the prayer guide on your refrigerator. Set a reminder on your phone. Pray at meals, at bedtime, in the car. Let the harvest field of Tennessee become personal to you.

PART TWO: GIVE - THE WORK OF FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

Nehemiah's workers gave everything they had - their time, their skill, their safety. We read that the nobles in Jerusalem had one task: to carry loads. No job was beneath the mission.

The Golden Offering is how Tennessee Baptists pool their resources to do together what none of us could do alone. Your gift - whether it is \$50 or \$500 - joins with the gifts of thousands of other individual believers to fund church planting, evangelism, disaster relief, ministry to the vulnerable, and so much more across the state.

This year marks our 125th anniversary. For 125 years, ordinary Tennessee Baptists have given faithfully, and God has used those gifts to change lives, plant churches, and redeem communities. Every generation has had to decide whether they would continue to fund the mission. This is our moment.

And here is something worth noting: 15% of what our church gives through the Golden Offering comes back to our local area - to resource ministry right here in your community.

PART THREE: GO - THE CALL TO PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

Nehemiah could have organized the rebuilding of the wall by committee, from a comfortable distance. He didn't. He left the palace, left his position, left his comfort - and he went.

Each worker built the section of wall nearest to their own home. It was personal. It was local. It required presence.

The Golden Offering is not only about sending dollars so that someone else can go. It is a call to participation - to use your gifts, your hands, your presence in your community and across Tennessee.

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Whether you go on a mission trip to plant a church in an underserved county, whether you serve through VBS this summer reaching the children of families who don't know Jesus, whether you volunteer in disaster relief or prison ministry or welcome refugees - you are the offering come to life.

Paul says we are to strive "side by side." That phrase means shoulder pressed to shoulder - close enough to feel the strain together. You cannot do that from a safe distance. You have to show up.

Application: Identify one concrete way you or your church will "go" in the next year. Sign up for a mission trip. Organize a VBS. Partner with an ethnic congregation in your county. Show up where the needs are - because that is where God is already at work.

CONCLUSION: THE WALL IS NOT FINISHED

The people of Jerusalem finished the wall in fifty-two days. Their enemies were astonished. Why? Because, as the text says, "this work had been accomplished with the help of our God" (Nehemiah 6:16).

Here in Tennessee, the wall is not finished. There are communities where the gospel has never taken root. There are families in crisis with no church to turn to. There are children growing up without a single Christian witness in their world. There are nations gathering in our cities and towns - people from every corner of the earth - who have come to us, and who need the hope we carry.

For 125 years, Tennessee Baptists have refused to leave those walls in ruins. And today, we are being called - again - to stand firm together, in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

Pray. Give. Go.

Not because the mission depends on you. But because God in His grace has invited you into it. The best days of Tennessee missions are not behind us. They are ahead of us - if we will rise up and build.

"Stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel." Philippians 1:27b