



MRS. MILDRED GOLDEN MONOLOGUE



Mrs. Golden could be portrayed as the young married woman she was in 1898-1902 when she led new and growing work of Tennessee WMU. She wore her long hair up in the fashion of that day. Her dress bodice was fitted with long sleeves and high neck and her skirts swept the floor. Undoubtedly, she frequently worked in a long black skirt and high neck shirtwaist with a pin at her throat.

Mrs. Golden could also be portrayed as she would have looked in 1943 when the offering was renamed. Her graying hair was cut short. Dresses suitable to her mature figure were mid-calf length and her shoes sensible.

The presenter should adapt the monologue to the point that she is very comfortable with the words.

Isn't this a wonderful time of year? Fall in Tennessee - days warm and golden - nights crisp and cool. A special haze hangs over the hills in early morning as laughing children wait for the school bus. In small chapels nestling by quiet country lanes and towering churches on busy city streets, hearts are joined, and prayers are lifted for the lost in our beloved Tennessee. Yes, it's time once again for the Week of Prayer for State Missions and the Golden Offering for Tennessee Missions. This is a very special time for me, for I am Mildred Bennett Golden.

Dr. Golden and I were so deeply honored when the state missions offering was named after us in 1943. This was doubly meaningful to us because it came from the state and Woman's Missionary Union that we both loved and loved to serve. If our part of the name can pass along to you our love and dreams for all missions, especially state missions, it will be the fulfillment of one of our most cherished desires. From the day of our marriage in 1898, Dr. Golden and I functioned as a team. Our great love was missions - our dream was to see lives touched and molded by God's power.

While I was still a small child, my parents left Boston for the hills of Tennessee. Through the years, a deep love for this beautiful state and her people took root and grew in my heart. I remember how full my life seemed. I taught school. I had my music and my church, Nashville Third Baptist. Then the Lord opened another door and, joyfully, I stepped through. You see, I married my pastor. Several years after marriage, I was asked to serve as Corresponding Secretary of Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union (today you would say Executive Director). My husband was behind me 100 percent in this new responsibility. Dr. Golden had served on various committees for the State Missions Board (today you say Tennessee Baptist Missions Board). This meant he was aware of the strengths and weaknesses of missions work in Tennessee. We dreamed of a missions society in each church - women praying, giving, and promoting missionary interests among the people. I threw myself wholeheartedly into the work, writing by hand hundreds of letters urging pastors to organize missions societies in their churches. Slowly, this organization for women grew, branching out into new lines of work.

About this same time, my husband was struggling with a growing burden of concern for our state. He listened each year at the state convention to the reports on destitution. These reports did not refer to economic poverty, but rather described the deep spiritual need of many communities without churches. It was as clear as the nose on your face! More state missionaries and ministries were needed, but many churches gave nothing to the work of state missions. There was no money to pay the meager salaries of these dedicated servants of God. Surely Tennessee Baptists could be challenged to give.

Dr. Golden was asked to serve as State Missions Secretary for Tennessee Baptists. After much prayer he resigned his pastorate and in late 1902 took up his duties directing the work of the State Missions Board.

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I was his secretary and handled his large correspondence with missionaries who served throughout the state holding revivals and pastoring, small struggling churches.

In 1901, before Dr. Golden's change of jobs, I began to observe the deep hold the weeks of prayer for home and foreign missions had on the hearts of our people. It seemed that a Week of Prayer for State Missions might be the way to lead our people to sacrificial giving. If Tennessee Baptists really understood the needs across our state, surely, they would respond. What might happen if Tennessee Baptists spent a week in prayer for these needs?

When I suggested such a plan to the WMU Central Committee, it "went over" in a big way. In 1902, I requested information from the state office and prepared material for the first three days. Others prepared material for the remaining three days so that we could have a six-day observance. Handwritten copies of these materials called "*Prayer and Privilege*" were mimeographed and mailed to over 1200 churches.

From 1902 to 1912 Dr. Golden and I wrote, copied, and mailed the programs for each week of prayer - without the help of all the fancy office machines you use today, I might add.

I'll never forget those days! All the extra sections were added to our dining room table. Our family and some of our neighbors were called in to help. We counted envelopes and leaflets, wrapped them in brown paper, tied, and addressed each bundle to be mailed to a church. Dr. Golden, himself, cut each piece of string carefully so that not one inch would be wasted. Such was his concern for the wise use of our limited missions funds. These busy days were also a time of earnest prayer that the Lord's power might go with each packet sent to each church across our beloved state.

Though that first offering of \$800 was not as large as we had hoped, we would not let ourselves be discouraged. The program material placed a much-needed emphasis upon the work of the State Missions Board and the areas of our state with little or no Baptist witness.

Tennessee Baptists and especially Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union can claim with grateful pride the honor of being the first state to have a special season of prayer and offering for state missions. Other states, seeing our program, asked for the privilege of adapting it for their state.

For the next two years, we worked especially hard to keep the urgent needs around the state before the churches. At last, those years of planning, promotion, and education for giving began to reap results. What a joy! Dr. Golden could report to the Convention in 1904 that gifts to state missions had more than doubled. Salaries could be paid! Calls for aid from new churches could be answered! We could move toward our goal: a Baptist church in every county seat and every town in Tennessee.

Does this dream seem too ambitious? Not if each generation catches the dream. Not if each generation passes it on. Though many years have passed - though methods and means of reaching the lost have changed, the deep spiritual needs of the people remain the same. I have been told that there are over four million lost and unchurched people in our state. FOUR MILLION. Who are these people? They are your next-door neighbor, that courteous boy who sacks your groceries at the store, the homeless wandering on your city streets. Will you enlarge the circle of your love to take them in? This is what the Week of Prayer for State Missions is all about - lives touched by God's power as you pray, as you reach out, and as you give your offerings. Tennessee Baptists working and praying together CAN make a difference.

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