

Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Greg Warner
Associate Editor: Bob Allen
Phone: (904) 262-6626
Fax: (904) 262-7745

May 16, 1995

In this issue:

- Foreign Mission Board seeking trademark on Lottie Moon offering
- Arlington's 'Queen of Division Street' ministers to prostitutes
- Baptists in Armenia arrested following Easter services

Foreign Mission Board seeking trademark on Lottie Moon offering

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has applied for a trademark on the name "Lottie Moon Christmas Offering" -- a move some Woman's Missionary Union leaders are worried will affect their rights to use the name.

The Lottie Moon offering, named for a 19th-century missionary to China, is sponsored jointly by the Richmond, Va.,-based FMB and WMU, an auxiliary based in Birmingham, Ala. The offering provides nearly half of the funds for the Foreign Mission Board's overseas efforts.

The future of that partnership has come into question of late, however, with a proposed restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention that ignores Woman's Missionary Union while calling for the Foreign Mission Board to assume primary responsibility for promoting the annual offering.

Members of the blue-ribbon committee recommending the restructure plan said they were empowered to study only agencies of the SBC and thus could not grant a ministry assignment to WMU, which elects its own executive board.

Some critics, however, have accused the committee of intentionally shunning WMU, whose leaders have not embraced the inerrancy movement which gained control of the convention during the 1980s.

FMB President Jerry Rankin in February took the lead in trying to console WMU members that "nothing has changed" in the auxiliary's historic partnership with the FMB. But administrators at the agency had already begun the application process for a trademark on the offering, without the knowledge of WMU leaders.

The application was filed in July 1994 but did not become public until May 11, after a routine computer database search by a WMU attorney in Virginia turned up the pending application.

In a statement released May 16, Dellanna O'Brien, WMU executive director, said leaders of the organization were "surprised and disappointed" by the revelation. "Our attorneys are investigating to see what legal grounds we have" in relation to the Lottie Moon name, she added.

Rankin said the application for trademark status has nothing to do with the board's relationship with WMU but is intended only to protect the name from unauthorized use. Some Southern Baptist churches have raised money

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

for the Lottie Moon offering but sent receipts to entities other than the FMB, such as the rival Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, he said.

"A church has a right to send funds anywhere it wants ... but funds for the Lottie Moon offering are legally for the Foreign Mission Board," he said.

No one, apparently, disputes that the mission board has the legal right to funds collected for the offering. A 1990 legal opinion issued by the SBC's attorney, James Guenther of Nashville, Tenn., said in the minds of most donors, the names Lottie Moon Offering and Foreign Mission Board are synonymous. A copy of that opinion was sent to WMU leaders at the time, Rankin said.

But questions about other issues, such as the right to promote the offering in churches or use the offering's name in promotional literature, are less clear.

The WMU claims at least an "emotional" ownership in the offering, of which some observers say they will be deprived when the restructure proposal cuts them out of any official role in promoting the offering.

The offering was started by WMU in 1888. WMU set allocations until 1956, when the auxiliary's leaders announced they would take only an advisory role in determining expenditures, with final approval by the Foreign Mission Board. WMU leaders also determined at that time to make it a church-wide offering and invite men also to contribute. Previously, it had been considered exclusively a WMU offering.

The FMB's 10-month-long silence over its trademark application has fueled suspicions raised by the restructure proposal, said Earlene Jessee, executive director of Virginia WMU.

"When the FMB is telling WMU that they are still partners in missions, why did they not inform them of this important action?" she asked.

Rankin said there was nothing secretive about the application, but "it didn't occur to us at that time to discuss it with anyone else after our earlier contact with WMU in 1990."

"There was no intent to withhold information from WMU or anyone else," Rankin said.

In a May 16 statement, Rankin said: "There is no effort on the part of the Foreign Mission Board to seize 'ownership' of the Lottie Moon name. We have simply sought to register the name of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, not the name Lottie Moon. ... It's really unfortunate for some to interpret this as an effort to betray the WMU or that it has anything to do with discussion in the Southern Baptist Convention over the WMU's role in promoting the offering. That is simply not true."

The executive board of Virginia WMU, a state organization affiliated with the national WMU, unanimously passed a statement May 13 requesting the Southern Baptist WMU to "immediately investigate this matter ... and take appropriate action."

National WMU leaders said they were studying the issue but would not comment beyond O'Brien's two-sentence statement.

The application became public when Sheryl Arflin, legal counsel for Virginia WMU, was searching the computer database at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office prior to applying for copyrights on names for some of Virginia WMU's ministries, said Jessee.

In the process Arflin discovered the Foreign Mission Board's pending application.

FMB officials reported that at least two other Lottie Moon trademarks are registered in Washington -- one for Lottie Moon's Underground, a restaurant in Oxford, Ohio, and another for "Tour of Lottie Moon's China," granted to Southern Baptist WMU in the late 1980s.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is expected to publish the FMB's application on May 26. The publication is routinely followed by 30-day period in which the application can be challenged.

Lottie Moon was a colorful and sometimes controversial Southern Baptist missionary who served in China from 1873 until she died from starvation on the way home from the mission field in 1912.

In 1887 she wrote a letter suggesting women in Virginia organize a special Christmas offering to help her

raise money for an infrequent furlough. The following year, Woman's Missionary Union was organized and immediately took up Moon's challenge by instituting an annual offering and week of prayer for foreign missions.

Moon's spirited missions reports in U.S. churches, delivered in Chinese dress, were popular but derided by some male critics as preaching, wrote Leon McBeth in his 1987 history, "The Baptist Heritage." Her martyr's death captured the imagination of Southern Baptists, causing the annual missions offering to grow dramatically, McBeth noted.

In 1918, at the suggestion of Annie Armstrong, WMU's first corresponding secretary, the annual offering was named the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions.

In the 107 years since it was instituted, the Lottie Moon Offering has raised more than half a billion dollars for foreign missions.

-30-

-- By Robert Dilday and Bob Allen

Arlington's 'Queen of Division Street' ministers to prostitutes, homeless

By Laura Horne

ARLINGTON, Texas (ABP) -- Ever since she was a little girl and her grandmother gave her a storybook about the Old Testament character Queen Esther, Bettye Baker wanted to be a queen. She finally has gotten her wish.

Baker is known as the "Queen of Division Street" to the prostitutes, homeless women and children she ministers to seven days a week through Mission Arlington, a non-profit organization affiliated with First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas.

"I never thought I'd get to be a queen like this, but I wear the title proudly," she said.

Baker conducts luncheons and Bible studies throughout the week for the ladies of Division Street, also providing care for their children. Most of her work centers around getting to know the women personally so she can discover and attempt to meet their needs.

"I pray for the Lord to send me all of the women in crisis on Division Street," Baker said.

Baker's work on Division Street began a year and a half ago when the Arlington police chief contacted Tillie Burgin, organizer of Mission Arlington. Police in Fort Worth had cracked down on prostitutes and many moved their business to nearby Arlington. The police appealed to Mission Arlington for help in cleaning up the new red-light district.

In the fall of 1993, police ran seven sting operations on Division Street with 40 to 45 prostitutes arrested each time, Baker said. Since Baker began her work in the neighborhood in August 1993, there have been no more sting operations and crime has been reduced.

Before being asked to help with the work, Baker said she had never noticed the need that existed on Division Street. "I didn't realize it [prostitution] was real in Arlington," she said.

"I had never seen it because I hadn't looked. I was too busy getting to church," said Baker. A pastor's wife, she had worked in every facet of church life. "As a pastor's wife, you are putty. Where there's a need, you fill it."

When Baker saw the need, she responded. When Burgin asked her if she had any ideas of how to go

about reaching the women of Division Street for Christ, Baker suggested a ladies' luncheon since most of the women on Division Street live in motel rooms and have no way to cook hot meals.

But Baker asked for a couple of days to pray and think about jumping into the new work, wondering what she had to offer that would make her effective in such a ministry.

During those two days, she said, the Lord brought to her mind Ezekiel 22:30 which says, "And I looked for a man who would stand in the gap for me."

"That was God talking to me. It went through my mind two days and two nights. I was to stand in the gap," said Baker.

She didn't know what to do or how to do it, but Baker went to work on Division Street knowing that God was in control. "All I knew was that I had to get out and meet people," she said.

She set out on a Saturday to visit the ladies of Division Street and invite them to the first luncheon the following Wednesday. Twelve women agreed to be picked up for the luncheon. But on Wednesday, only one showed up.

"Tillie asked me how many I had and I told her I was pleased because attendance was doubled. We had two counting me," Baker said.

"Normally, I would be discouraged. But I wasn't worried. God started it, God was in it and he still is. I have to make a difference one woman at a time," she continued.

The third week, attendance at the luncheon doubled to four. The fourth week it doubled again to eight, and the fifth week to 16. The Wednesday before Thanksgiving, attendance doubled yet again to 32.

On a recent Wednesday, 60 women attended the luncheon. With the help of women volunteers from the church, Baker gives the women a hot meal and leads a Bible study and prayer time.

After working on Division Street for several weeks, Baker led a young woman to the Lord. As Baker got into her car and drove home, she recalled, there were tears of joy in her eyes. But there were tears of sadness as well, because she couldn't remember the last time she had a similar opportunity.

"The Lord told me, 'Bettye, it's because you spend all of your time teaching saved people,' " she said.

She had been substitute teacher for a Sunday school class at First Baptist Church in Arlington. Now, she says she has found her niche with the women of Division Street.

"God called me out of my comfortable pew in such an emphatic way that I know my place," she said.

"I have never done anything in all of my life for the church or God that has given me such extreme joy and fulfillment. I like to choose to work for God. It is my choice and I love it," Baker said.

Baker said she is sometimes asked why she continues to work on Division Street, since most of the women apparently are not interested in changing their lifestyles, but only in getting a warm meal.

"That's fine," she said. "They need a warm meal. Every time they come, that gives God another chance to touch their lives."

Baker said she hopes the women of Division Street will see Christ's love demonstrated in her service to them.

"We've got to show them that there's something different when God is in people's lives," she said.

Baptists in Armenia arrested following Easter services

YEREVAN, Armenia (ABP) -- Members of Yerevan Baptist Church in Armenia were arrested and held several hours following Easter services April 23, according to European Baptist Press Service.

Twenty people in military uniforms arrested the Baptists. Among those arrested was Yuri Avanesian, president of the Baptist Union of Armenia. The Baptists were held several hours in a military office and released.

Few details are known, but the crackdown was carried out by the Armenian military and targeted only Protestant churches, wrote Gregory Komendant, president of the Euro-Asiatic Federation of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and Yuri Apatov, executive secretary of the Baptist Union of Russia, in a letter to European Baptist leaders.

In addition to Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists and Pentecostals were also targeted, they said. No non-Christian groups in Armenia were involved.

Armenian authorities have promised to investigate the incident. It is unclear who gave the order for the arrests. It is also unclear if church documents and an automobile confiscated at the time of the arrests were returned when the prisoners were released.

-30-

-- ABP staff

END