

# WMU celebration spotlights surrender, sacrifice and service

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GROVE CITY, OHIO (BP)—Participants at the Woman’s Missionary Union Missions Celebration and annual meeting elected a new president, heard stories of surrender and sacrificial service from missionaries, and even had the chance to kiss a llama.

The Good News Llamas ministry of southern Ohio brought two llamas women at the missions celebration could “kiss”—actually hold a cookie in one’s mouth for the llama to take. The ministry shares the gospel through their llama farm and taking the animals to events.



Linda Cooper, recording secretary for the Woman’s Missionary Union, speaks during the WMU Annual Meeting and Missions Celebration June 15 at the First Baptist Church of Grove City in Grove City, Ohio. (SBC Photo by Matt Miller)Linda Cooper, a member of Forest Park Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Ky., was elected national WMU president. She succeeds Debby Akerman,

president for the last five years.

Akerman described the call to follow Christ as “an all-or-nothing call; it is a lay-it-all-on-the-line call, a call to surrender, to sacrifice and to serve.”

Cooper praised Akerman, saying she led with “such grace and such a godly spirit.”

“Please pray for me, for national WMU and for those lives who are being eternally changed through you as you lead missions education each week through WMU,” Cooper said. “With God’s help, I will live wholeheartedly for the Lord, moment by moment, as I serve WMU because I, too, am ‘both feet in.’”

Wanda Lee, executive director of national WMU, said missionaries represent “the primary reason we are here. We are here to know more about their work and how we may partner with our missionaries around the world as they share the gospel.”

Marion G. “Bud” Fray, retired IMB missionary, served in Zimbabwe and South Africa 28 years. He and former missionary and author Kim Davis wrote the WMU emphasis book for the year, *Both Feet In: A Journey to Surrender, Sacrifice and Service*.

Fray told a story from his time in Zimbabwe when he met a man named Mandebvu. Through the death of Mandebvu’s brother, Fray was able to minister to him and present the gospel, and Mandebvu accepted Christ as Lord and Savior.



Arlene Miller is presented the 2015 Dellanna West O'Brien Leadership Award by Debby Akerman, Woman's Missionary Union president, during the Sunday evening session of the June 14 WMU Annual Meeting and Missions Celebration at First Baptist Church in Grove City, Ohio. The two-day event was held prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 16-17 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. (SBC Photo by Matt Miller) About a year later, Fray had started a new church. Mandebvu and his family hiked three miles to church even amid torrential rains, crossing swelling rivers. Fray told Mandebvu he did not have to bring his family across the river during the rains. It was too deep, Fray insisted.

"My pastor, my teacher, there is no such thing as too deep or too far," Mandebvu told him. "When I came to Jesus, I came both feet in. No questions asked, no water too deep, no too-far-to-church."

Terry Dorsett, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England, told stories about wholehearted surrender. Previously, Dorsett and his wife Kay served as NAMB church-planting missionaries in Vermont, where he met his greatest challenge. Driving one winter day, his family was hit head-on by a drunk driver. His son was badly injured. Although after months his family healed physically, Dorsett could not forgive the driver.

“Even missionaries can get angry and bitter,” he said.

But God began to deal with his lack of forgiveness. Dorsett committed to forgive and share God’s love with her. When released from prison, the woman asked Dorsett to tell her more about Jesus. She repented of her sins and gave her life to Christ.

Capt. Michael Coleman, a U.S. Army chaplain, challenged participants at the WMU Missions Celebration to educate themselves about post-traumatic stress disorder, pray for those who are hurting and be a friend to those who come to their churches.

Coleman served on the initial task force to launch WMU’s Project HELP: PTSD. It’s important for churches to be prepared for those who are returning to the United States from battlefields, Coleman insisted, but he warned it’s not a strategy for building church membership.

“This is not an outreach opportunity for your church,” he said. “This is inreach. You can be that back-row Baptist who grabs that person by the hand and says no matter what you look like, no matter who you are, I’m going to walk with you along the way.”

Also at the WMU Missions Celebration:

- Three of the six National Acteens Panelists told how God impacted their lives through Acteens—Haley Harrison of Charlotte, N.C.; Hydiatu Konneh of Louisville, Ky.; and Ashley Johns of Katy. Each panelist received a \$1,000 scholarship from the WMU Foundation.
- Arlene Miller of Crofton, Ky., received the 2015 Dellanna West O’Brien Leadership Award.
- WMU elected Tana Hartsell of Charlotte, N.C., as recording secretary.

The next WMU Missions Celebration and annual meeting will be June 12-13, 2016, in St. Louis, Mo.

*With additional reporting by Kathie Chute.*