

Pastor says media frenzy all a mistake

California station had linked relative of child murder suspect to church in Clarkston

By Brandon Macz of the Tribune

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A Clarkston pastor is hopeful a media frenzy that has fallen on the community will stop regarding what he calls false reports that a relative of a woman charged with murdering a child in Tracy, Calif., had ties to his church.

Bill Creutzberg said the first report - coming from Sacramento, Calif., news station KCRA 3 - inaccurately connected the Rev. Lane Lawless to the First Church of God in Clarkston.

Lawless is the grandfather of Melissa Huckaby, 28, a Sunday-school teacher alleged to have murdered 8-year-old Sandra Cantu of Tracy. Cantu's body was found in a suitcase floating in a nearby pond on April 6.

"I don't think there's any connection with the First Church of God at all," said Creutzberg, who has been the pastor for nearly two years. He added nobody by the name of Lane Lawless was found in church records.

He said he was contacted by the FBI on April 10 - the day Huckaby was arrested - but the information requested was in regard to a predecessor of his who served at the church.

Creutzberg has been contacted by a number of media outlets, he said, including "Inside Addition" and "The Today Show," even having breakfast with a producer of the show to put the story to rest. KCRA 3, however, is not alone, he said.

"They've made some assumptions and said Mr. Lawless was associated with my church, and he never was," Creutzberg said of the media coverage. "Some news people have made that assumption, and it wasn't true."

Clarkston Detective Dan Combs said he was contacted by the FBI last week seeking any records on Lawless.

"I haven't found any records of him," he said.

Asotin County Sheriff Ken Bancroft confirmed his office was contacted by the Sacramento station, but he has not been contacted by the FBI.

"I haven't been asked for their input or anything," he said. "I'm not going to interfere with their investigation."

Law enforcement agencies in Nez Perce County said they also have no information regarding a connection between Lawless and the area.

Phone calls placed to the FBI's Lewiston office and the KCRA newsroom were not returned Friday.

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