

SF-based school to take over Bethany campus

Classes to begin in September, officials say

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SCOTTS VALLEY — Two months after Bethany University officials announced the small private college was closing, another Christian university has stepped up to fill a void left by the nearly 100-year-old institution.

Though Bethany's 61-year-tenure in Scotts Valley has come to an end, its name likely will live on. San Francisco-based Olivet University, which is affiliated with the Evangelical Assembly of Presbyterian Churches, said Tuesday it has requested permission to use Bethany's name and "to adopt and carry forward the mission of Bethany."

Escrow is expected to close in November on the campus, which encompasses more than 60 acres off Bethany Drive west of Highway 17.

Bethany officials would not dis-

close terms of the sale, and messages left for Dr. William Wagner, Olivet University president, were not returned Tuesday.

The Rev. James Braddy, an Elk Grove resident who is chairman of Bethany's board of trustees, confirmed escrow is scheduled to close in November. He declined to go into specifics, saying only that "the next step is to complete all the things that need to be done before the end of escrow."

Scotts Valley Mayor Dene Bustichi said he believed the new campus will operate as a branch, with future plans calling for Olivet to move its main campus there from San Francisco.

Bethany trustees and officers with the Bethany Corp. signed the initial paperwork Friday, according to a release issued by Bethany on Tuesday.

"Under the circumstances,

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"I'm disappointed that the school had to close," Braddy said, but added that he was "very happy that another Christian entity has taken over the campus and will continue the legacy of Bethany in their own educational process."

Citing years of financial difficulties and falling enrollment — 534 students attended last year — Bethany officials announced plans to close the school in June. In July, Bethany Corp. board members voted to dissolve the corporation, but that will happen only when its estimated \$15 million debt is satisfied.

The official end came Aug. 12, the last day of the sum-

mer "teach-out" session — and the day the Western Association of Schools and Colleges pulled its accreditation, according to Teri Cannon, the association's vice president. Accreditation was pulled when the college announced it was closing.

Hope for Bethany's survival remained through June, when officials announced plans for a group of financial backers to keep it afloat, and named longtime Bethany leader Sharon Anderson as interim president.

Anderson now works as San Jose site director for Rocklin-based William Jessup University's School for Professional Studies. Mark Laird, a former Bethany coach, has since begun working as an assistant coach at Texas A&M International University in Laredo, Texas. He said he's heard of

other faculty and staff obtaining positions at other institutions, including Patten University in Oakland and Craig College of Ministry in Sacramento.

"Little by little, I'm hearing of people finding jobs and homes," he said.

Braddy's statements about Bethany's continued legacy were echoed by the Rev. William Vickery, a fellow trustee and Rocklin resident who also served for 14 years as the university's district superintendent.

"We're happy that the purpose for which the property was originally purchased and dedicated will continue — it will just be under a different university," he said.

Bethany, the oldest of the 19 Assemblies of God colleges, was founded in 1919 as a training school for an inner-

city ministry in San Francisco, and had operated in Scotts Valley since 1950. Olivet offers degrees in various disciplines including theology, music, journalism and business, according to its website, and is accredited by the Association for Biblical Higher Education.

Bustichi said Olivet had expressed interest in Scotts Valley even before the board's vote to dissolve the Bethany Corp. in July, and called the pending move "a good thing" for the city.

Olivet has its finances in order, he said, with officials planning to move forward with various maintenance projects and finishing a new cafeteria and student center building — a half-completed project Bethany officials abandoned at the beginning of the year.