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YOLO COUNTY NEWS



Built in 1932, the Newman Center on Fifth Street will have to close due to seismic safety issues. Sue Cockrell/Enterprise file photo

Local News

Safety prompts closure at Newman Center

By **Jeff Hudson**

The Newman Catholic Center in Davis — a college-and-community program which has operated for some years on the 500 block of C Street — is holding meetings and events in a variety of locations these days, following the closure of two historic brick buildings (originally built as the home to St. James Catholic Church).

The Diocese of Sacramento quietly decided to close the two buildings several weeks ago. According to Vince Nims, director of the Newman Catholic Center in Davis, there were “structural safety concerns in both the Hall (the old church) and our Center (the office and kitchen building). Effective Oct. 10, no students are permitted in these buildings,” Nims said.

From the street, cracks in the brickwork can be seen zigzagging through portions of the buildings’ exterior.

Nims added, “Although the two buildings are closed, the Newman Center is not, and all its ministries remain intact and will continue. The offices were quickly relocated to the (adjacent) Newman House (newly painted blue), at 413 Fifth St. There is also enough space in the Newman House for small fellowship gatherings and other meetings, and it is also the new place to go to connect, relax and hang out.

“As for our bigger gatherings, we are currently relocating some events to the UC Davis campus, as well as other locations. For other specific ministries, pay close attention to social media announcements. Our Sunday night 9 p.m. services will continue at St. James Catholic Church, 1275 B St., as usual,” Nims said.

Kevin Eckery, spokesman for the Sacramento Diocese, confirmed the buildings’ closures. “We always knew we’d have to replace those buildings eventually, but the day has come sooner than we expected,” Eckery said. “In the meantime, the Newman Center is still open for business and is also sharing some facilities with St. James Catholic Church.”

Looking ahead, Eckery indicated that replacing the brick buildings from the 1930s will be a process that involves some time and organizing. “We’ll be developing a plan for replacing the structures over the coming months, and will be working with our neighbors to get community input regarding whatever takes their place,” Eckery told The Enterprise.

Nims said that the old brick buildings hold a special place in the memory of many longtime Davis residents. “The closure of these buildings ends decades of ministry within their walls. Erected in 1932, the old church served as a parish to thousands in the community, and an outreach for students of Davis, and it eventually ended up the Newman Catholic Center as we have it today. The events at 514 C St. included but are not limited to countless weddings, baptisms, Masses, funerals, retreats, Confirmations, fellowship gatherings, socials, Newman Nights, prayer meetings, leadership events, reunions and much more,” Nims said.

Newman Centers are found in the vicinity of many college and university campuses around the nation. According to the Newman Catholic Center in Davis website, “The Newman Catholic Centers empower college students to form authentic Christian community, and celebrate the diverse expressions of their Catholic faith.” St. James Catholic Church organized in Davisville during the late 1800s and has had buildings in several locations since that time.

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