

# Pasadena Star News

Article Published: Friday, May 14, 2004 - 9:51:15 PM PST

## Auditorium preserved

### *Harvest Rock, Maranatha pool funds, buy portion of Ambassador campus*

By Gary Scott , Staff Writer

PASADENA -- The Worldwide Church of God announced Friday it has sold a large portion of the remaining Ambassador campus to a consortium of local religious institutions, ending a controversial plan to build houses on the site.

The highly anticipated deal will preserve the world-renowned Ambassador Auditorium as a house of worship, and put the mothballed classrooms and athletic facilities back into use.

Maranatha High School and Harvest Rock Church bought the 13-acre property for an undisclosed amount.

"Needless to say we think we instantly have some of the finest facilities for a high school anywhere," said David Poole, president of the Maranatha High School board of directors. "It's a great day for Maranatha, it's a great day for Harvest Rock and we think it is a great day for Pasadena."

Mayor Bill Bogaard said the sale will "reduce the scale of concern" about the property. Questions remain about what the Worldwide Church of God plans to do with the remaining property.

The property fronts St. John Avenue and includes many of the academic and athletic facilities that were once the center of the Worldwide Church of God's thriving Ambassador College.

Maranatha, a nondenominational Christian school, will use the buildings to house its 500 students.

The auditorium will become Harvest Rock church, the charismatic Christian church founded in Pasadena 10 years ago.

"It is way beyond our expectations," said Senior Pastor Che Ahn of Harvest Rock. "We just thank God for making something that was such a hope into a reality."

Ahn said his congregation will consider reopening the auditorium to public performances, but only if they do not conflict with the church's values and another group underwrites the cost. He said he will reach out to the Ambassador Hall Board for the Performing Arts to discuss these issues.

Mike Vogler, executive director of Save South Orange Grove, hailed the deal as a "victory for the community." The group has vigorously opposed plans to build housing on the property, saying it would ruin the surrounding neighborhoods.

"If this community didn't stand up (against) overdevelopment we'd be saddled right now with the Legacy development," Vogler said, referring to an earlier development plan for the property.

Vogler said Save South Orange Grove will continue to watch what happens with the remaining 17 acres.

Over the past few months, the Worldwide Church of God has sold five historic mansions along Orange Grove Boulevard and the 13-acre east campus. With the latest sale, the church has enough money to meet its financial obligations and then some, said Bernard Schnippert, the



(Left to Right) David Poole (President of Board of Directors of Maranatha High School ), Chet Crane (Head of School at Maranatha High School ), and Dr. Che Ahn (Senior Pastor at Harvest rock Church in front of auditorium at Ambassador College in Pasadena. Maranatha High School, and Harvest Rock Church bought a portion of the Ambassador campus, including the Ambassador Auditorium from the Worldwide Church of God. (Staff photo by Walt Mancini)

#### OTHER ARTICLES IN THIS SECTION

5/17/2004

- [Occidental commencement](#)
- ['Jailhouse justice' problematic](#)
- [Earthquake maven gets new position](#)
- [Art Center's south campus dedicated](#)
- [A venerable birthday party](#)
- [Students brush up on painting](#)
- [Life imitates art for young South Pasadena music students](#)
- [Adult film stars meet their public for a price at convention](#)

church's director of finance.

As such, he said there is no rush to dispose of the remaining property. Meantime, the church will lease office space from Maranatha.

"We are in a very good position financially and able to frankly take our time to consider the next steps,' said Schnippert. "Our mission here is over, we are going to eventually move on.'

Maranatha and Harvest Rock have both been looking for a permanent home for some time, in part to escape the cramped conditions at William Carey International University in Pasadena, where they currently lease property.

Ahn said he first became interested in the Ambassador Auditorium last April, when Schnippert approached him seeking support for plans to develop the Ambassador property.

Schnippert said the auditorium was not for sale separately.

Harvest Rock knew Maranatha was also looking for a permanent home and the two organizations decided to combine their resources.

Maranatha had sought to build a high school on property it owns in Sierra Madre. The City Council there rejected the plans and the school filed a suit.

Poole said he expects the suit will be resolved shortly as a result of this sale but would not comment further.

*-- Gary Scott can be reached at (626) 578-6300, Ext. 4458, or by e-mail at [gary.scott@sgvn.com](mailto:gary.scott@sgvn.com) .*