

Crystal Cathedral files for bankruptcy protection

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Unable to satisfy creditors owed millions of dollars, the ailing Crystal Cathedral ministry in Southern California has filed for bankruptcy protection.

The once-influential megachurch founded by Robert H. Schuller in recent years has reduced its purchase of television time, laid off staffers and sold some of its real estate holdings, but the combination of a recession, an aging congregation in Garden Grove and pastoral succession problems within the Schuller family have tested the founder's optimistic outlook.

"Tough times never last, but tough people do," current senior pastor Sheila Schuller Coleman told a news conference October 18, repeating a motto of her famous father. The church filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy that morning, declaring that it could not reach a settlement with some vendors who sought court action against the church.

Jim Penner, the executive producer of the *Hour of Power* television program and son-in-law of the senior Schuller, said the church's debt is about \$44 million. According to court documents, the church has assets of between \$50 million and \$100 million.

Coleman succeeded her brother Robert A. Schuller as pastor after their father became dissatisfied in 2008 with his son's preaching and leadership. The senior Schuller, who never fully retired, brought in a series of guest preachers before handing the pulpit duties to Coleman.

Coleman

said the ministry's most recent financial reports include the best cash flow in a decade. However, the Crystal Cathedral—which has relied on professionals for its holiday pageants and polished television services—canceled its annual "Glory of Easter" production this year and may have to skip the "Glory of Christmas" again this year.

The decline in donations forced the church to lay off 140 people in the past year and drop half of its *Hour of Power* air time. The congregation no longer employs an orchestra and professional choir singers. Volunteers now make up the church's choir, Coleman said.