

Crystal Cathedral Congregation Fails in Last-Minute Attempt to Keep Church Building

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Some congregation members of the Crystal Cathedral Ministries have failed in their last-minute attempt to keep the signature Garden Grove, Calif., property by claiming a 99-year lease, as the Santa Ana bankruptcy court ordered Monday to proceed with the sale to a Catholic Diocese.

In an unexpected twist to the story of the long bankruptcy suit of the famous ministry that launched the first televangelical show, "The Hour of Power," members of the congregation board launched in late January an attempt to block the sale of the signature glass building at an eleventh hour, The Orange County Register reports.

On Jan. 25 members of the church apparently asserted the existence of a 99-year lease that the congregation was to hold. If the existence of such lease was proven, it could potentially halt the sale. But the U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Robert Kwan rejected the claims Monday for lack of sufficient proof, the Register reported.

The congregants claimed that the lease was established in 1987, when the congregation agreed to give the campus to Robert Schuller Ministries, in return for a 99-year lease, the Register reported. However attorneys for the ministries said they could find no record of such a lease or lease payments. Senior Pastor Sheila Schuller Coleman - the founder's daughter - testified Monday that the congregation paid the 99-year lease in full Monday morning and that she has actually first heard of the lease the week of Jan. 9. Coleman sits on both the congregation and ministries boards.

The megachurch founded and run by Robert H. Schuller and his family has been in the red for an estimated \$50 million and receiving pressure from creditors. It filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on Oct. 18, 2010.

The ministry's board agreed on Nov. 17, 2011, to sell their signature property for \$57.5 million to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, although it was [made clear that the decision was very reluctant](#).

The Crystal Cathedral's congregants have [clearly expressed their dissatisfaction with the sale](#) throughout the court proceedings.

The ministries owe about \$7.5 million to unsecured creditors, according to local media reports. The church put its campus on sale to raise money in July 2011. On Nov. 17, 2011, the ministry [ultimately decided](#) to sell their property to the diocese, over another bidder – Chapman University. The diocese has promised that the congregation can continue to use the cathedral for three years after the sale, before the diocese will make it its spiritual home.

The sale is expected to close within days now, according to local reports.

Read the original report [here](#).

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