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Corona Synagogue Files Bankruptcy

Temple Beth Shalom in Corona, California filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection August 2 in an effort to avoid foreclosure of their new synagogue. It is uncertain whether the Temple at California Avenue that belongs to Beth Shalom congregation will remain open or be compelled to vacate the premises.

Temple secretary Sam Miller said the synagogues financial problems stem from the economic recession and a lower than expected growth in number of members. "Before the economy crashed, we would have been in excellent shape. There would have been no problem at all," Miller said. "We just didn't get new members as we anticipated. The economy caused people to put their wallets in their back pockets."

The Temple has seen membership dwindle after several members left the 75 member congregation while others stopped paying their membership dues after hearing that the synagogue might be liquidated. Miller commented, "It's a very upsetting thing for the membership. We have two members that I've talked to right now that are probably leaving because of this. We have a lot of other people that are upset".

One of the synagogue's members, Constantine "Dino" Petrovic gave a picture of things when he said, "We had a number of programs at the temple where we would arbitrarily reach out and do random acts of kindness and help the community, but all of that has been cut off because the funding has been cut off. The school hours were cut in half. We lost one of the teachers because we weren't able to pay. The Hebrew school is two

days instead of five.” He added that this has caused low morale among the congregation during the High Holy Days.

Some congregation members were skeptical of whether the synagogue had the financial means to build its \$1.5 million temple that included the temple sanctuary, school, office, library and kitchen in a 4,500-square-foot building that opened in April, 2009. “They thought it was risky. It turned out that they were right but for the wrong reasons, the economy crashed,” Miller said. “We got into trouble on this.”

The building project came about when the congregation outgrew its previous building on West 9th and South Sheridan streets. The age of the dingy building was a turn-off to new potential members, so the board sold the property in 2000.

When the new temple was launched, membership doubled but it was not as much as anticipated and by August 2009, were in financial distress. The congregation that originally formed in 1968, is trying to fend off foreclosure with California Bank & Trust, which holds the loan balance of \$1.6 million. The bank is trying to push through with the foreclosure.

The temple owes the city of Corona \$43,203 through a redevelopment loan. In addition it owes \$38,802.96 for 52 cemetery plots. Among their assets is a timeshare in Mexico worth \$15,800.