

Senior Schuller breaks with son over TV roles: Hour of Power in jeopardy

by [John Dart](#) in the [November 18, 2008](#) issue

After turning over the Crystal Cathedral pulpit nearly three years ago to his son as the main preacher on the *Hour of Power* TV program, founding pastor Robert H. Schuller now says he has “parted ways” with his son over their opposing visions for the ministry.

Schuller, 82, announced October 25 that the program, seen by millions worldwide, would be placed in “jeopardy” unless the pulpit at the Garden Grove, California, church were offered as “a platform for the greatest preachers in the world.”

Walt Kallestad, pastor of the 12,000-member Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Arizona, was scheduled to preach November 2. Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago was named as a possibility.

The congregation’s board made the decision on Robert A. Schuller, 54, who remains as senior pastor but made no immediate public comment.

The regional body of the Reformed Church in America said in a statement that there had been “persistent and very real differences” between Robert A. and Robert H. over the future of the RCA-affiliated congregation and its television ministry. One RCA pastor said the relationship “is not irreparable, but it’s gone through some difficult days.”

Speaking to congregants on October 26, the senior Schuller said that long-term survival of the program called for expanding its lineup of preachers.

“The real minister’s name that we honor is Jesus, not Schuller,” he said to thunderous applause, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. “I was called to start a mission, not a church,” Schuller said. “You don’t try to preach . . . what is sin and what isn’t sin.”

The church, with some 10,000 members at its apex, downplayed its denominational identity and sought to attract seekers and nonbelievers. Though both father and son graduated from Hope College in Holland, Michigan, the father graduated from an RCA seminary and the son earned his graduate degree at evangelical Fuller Seminary.

Asked if his son tried to turn the Crystal Cathedral into a church rather than a mission, Schuller declined to say. "But I think it is a wise question," he added.

Robert H. Schuller, an acknowledged pioneer among U.S. megachurch pastors, espouses an upbeat religious approach he calls a "theology of self-esteem."

Robert A. Schuller, the only son among five children, founded a congregation in San Juan Capistrano, California, before joining the Crystal Cathedral staff. He was later named copastor. Subsequently the church announced to the media more than once that young Robert was the chosen successor.

"He has special gifts that work very well on television—frankly, an attractive face," the senior Schuller said in a Century interview in 2002. Robert H. said also that when he was between 80 and 85 years old he would yield the majority of the televised sermons to his son.

He did, but now looks to enlarge the lineup. "I will continue to host the weekly service and also preach from time to time," the founding pastor announced.