

Eight Torah Scrolls Recovered from Burned Synagogue



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Mike Baddin awoke in the middle of the night Monday to a news notification: A Duluth synagogue was burning.

He rushed downtown to find it was his, the Adas Israel Congregation synagogue, where he is a board member and his parents were before him.

"The instant I saw it, I realized it was a total loss," Baddin said. "I am grateful my parents weren't alive to see this. I hate to say that, but it would have just killed them right on the spot."



A few artifacts and eight of 14 Torah scrolls were recovered.

WDIO-TV



He said the 120-year-old synagogue was a place that represented generations of Jews.

"The first thing going through my mind these days, of course, is is this a set fire? And was it an arson act? Was it an act of hate?" Baddin asked.

He hopes the Duluth Fire Department can pinpoint where and how it started. Monday evening, after the building was stabilized, the DFD was hoping to get investigators in to begin figuring it out. Police Chief Mike Tusken said his investigators have interviewed two "people of interest," but he said it's too soon to say whether it is a criminal investigation.

In the meantime, Baddin said the Adas Israel community has felt supported by people of all faiths.

Glen Avon Presbyterian Church Lead Pastor Robyn Weaver spoke at a press conference Monday afternoon, offering "prayer, hope and encouragement."

"We do commonly share a saying that goes, 'When one suffers, we all suffer together,'" Weaver said. "But I add, together, we can find courage, and we can find energy and support to carry on."

Baddin said immediately Monday morning, other congregations offered support and even spaces to worship. He said they are thankful that they will be able to do that because eight of 14 Torah scrolls were rescued from the rubble.

"Without that, we can't really conduct our full services on the Sabbath or on our high holy days that are coming up soon," he said. "So we're very blessed that way, and we'll just have to figure out where we're going to do that."

Authorities hope to have another update Tuesday.