

Without Walls Avoids Foreclosure

✖ **March 11, 2009** – Without Walls International Church recently dodged the threat of foreclosure thanks to a revised deal that converts the payments on the Tampa, Fla., church to interest-only loans, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported.

“I’m very, very delighted,” White told reporters last week. “It was a great victory for our church and for our people that we don’t have that pressure under us like we did have before.”

In November, the California-based Evangelical Christian Credit Union began foreclosure proceedings against Without Walls after it said the church defaulted on a \$1 million loan.

White said Without Walls had never missed a loan payment in nearly eight years and accused the Christian credit union of wanting to sell the church property for a profit to avoid failing itself.

Credit union officials denied that claim, saying they had negotiated with Without Walls for months before taking legal action.

White said the negotiations fell through when the credit union sought control of the church’s intellectual properties, including its ministry tapes and books.

The church refused to accept the loan modifications and was soon facing foreclosure of both the Tampa site and the Lakeland, Fla., branch, which is the former Carpenter’s Home Church. Without Walls owes \$13 million on its Tampa property and \$12.5 million on the Lakeland site, the *Times* reported.

White said he was likely wrong about the credit union wanting to sell the church because it did not approach a developer who was interested in buying the Tampa property.

Under the revised loan, the Tampa church would pay about \$59,000 a month, while the Lakeland property would continue to pay roughly \$70,000 a month, Without Walls' chief financial officer Debbie Pullen told the *Times*. Full payment on the loans on both sites will be due in July 2010.

White said the church still plans to sell the Tampa property, which like the Lakeland campus was put on the market in March 2008. But he said the revised loan agreement gives the church time to refinance or to sell some of its assets.

If the property is sold, White said the Tampa church would either merge with the Lakeland congregation or build a new facility in Tampa debt-free.

Without Walls' attendance has dropped significantly since White and his former co-pastor, Paula White, divorced. White also lost his daughter to brain cancer last year. But White said the revised loans represent another chance for the ministry.

"It's very exciting," he said. "Lord knows our church has been through a lot in 18 months. ... It kind of gives everybody a sigh of relief. We can now focus on what we're called to do."

He told Tampa Bay Online that the church rehired three of seven employees it laid off earlier this year. The seven workers represented roughly a quarter of the church's staff.

White also said Without Walls has hired a California attorney to explore filing a lawsuit against *The Tampa Tribune*, which White has accused defaming him and his ex-wife in its reporting on the church and the couple's divorce.