

COGIC Removes Orlando Pastor

Derrick Hutchins and his flock were removed from their church in June

Bishop Chandler D. Owens, presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ, finally got his man. In June, a local court granted Owens the authority to remove Derrick Hutchins as pastor of Orlando Institutional Church of God in Christ (COGIC).

Circuit Judge William C. Gridley ruled June 23 that COGIC Western Florida jurisdiction's conviction of the Orlando congregation for misconduct for walking out of the church when H. Jenkins Bell-Owens' political

ally whom Owens appointed to replace Hutchins—was valid and that the remedy sought by COGIC to remove Hutchins as pastor was enforceable.

Hutchins took his 800-members with him and set up a privately owned corporation—New Life shield his new church—New Life COGIC—from further legal harassment from Owens.

The private corporation provides New Life COGIC with property rights under Florida law that the church did not enjoy under Malone Memorial COGIC—renamed Orlando Institutional COGIC after Hutchins became pastor in 1996.

Hutchins maintains that Owens turned on him for political reasons after Owens learned that Hutchins supports Bishop

Charles E. Blake as presiding bishop in the November election. Blake is pastor of the 18,000-member West Angeles COGIC in Los Angeles.

COGIC insiders say Owens may have won the battle, but the win may have cost him the war—eroding the support he'll need to win re-election in November to another four-year term. Blake and Bishop Gilbert E. Patterson will seek Owens' post in November.