

Paulk May Face January Trial

The Atlanta pastor has been accused of molestation by a former parishioner

Bishop Earl Paulk, pastor of the Cathedral at Chapel Hill in suburban Atlanta, could stand trial as soon as January to answer civil allegations of sexual misconduct being brought by one of his former church members.

Jessica Battle filed suit against Paulk in April 2001, accusing him of sexually molesting her when she was between the ages of 7 and 11 and again at the age of 17, according to the suit. Battle, now 23, is the granddaughter of Lynn Mays, a pastor at the church.

Battle's attorney, Lanny Bridgers, said the trial would begin no earlier than January 15. He acknowledged that depositions, a form of pretrial sworn testimony, began in the case last spring.

Accusations against Paulk, 75, date back many years. In 1993, Charisma reported claims by a former Paulk ghostwriter who said she had an affair with him for more than a year. In 1992, seven women went public with accusations that Cathedral leaders sexually harassed them.

Paulk declined to speak with Charisma for this story and has declined comment on three other occasions in the last nine years. While he remains the church's senior pastor, his nephew Donnie Earl Paulk has been more visible in the pulpit in recent months.

In July 2001, David Brokaw, a spokesman for Paulk, told

Charisma that the pastor denied all allegations against him. Battle is seeking unspecified monetary damages and is calling for a jury trial.

Richard Daigle in Atlanta