

Bishop Eddie Long Returns to New Birth Pulpit

Bishop Eddie Long has returned to the pulpit of **New Birth Missionary Baptist Church**.

His appearance at the Watch Night Service at the Lithonia, Ga., **megachurch** seems to mark his formal return. Although church officials could not immediately be reached for comment, Long preached at the Empowerment Service on Wednesday night on kingdom alignment.

After a month-long absence, Long first appeared on New Year's Eve preaching from his pulpit with his usual fiery style, saying: "2012 is here! Shake off the remorse, shake off the depression, shake off the financial burden, start using your hands again and reconstructing! God is more about your future than he was about your past."

Long stepped away from the pulpit to deal with family issues last month after his wife, Vanessa, filed divorce citing "irreconcilable differences" with "no hope of reconciliation."

"I'm still your pastor. You'll still receive my direction," the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* quoted Long saying. "You've given me some weeks to take care of some family business." Long said he would take the time to heal his family, however Vanessa has not announced any change in plans.

The Longs got married in 1990. They have three children together and one from Long's previous marriage. Together they built New Birth Missionary Baptist Church. But the stress of the varied accusations the **charismatic preacher**, including four young members of the church claiming that the bishop used gifts, trips and money to coerce them into engaging in sex acts with him beginning when they were 17 or 18, seems to have taken its toll on the marriage.