

Bishop Eddie Long's Wife Announces Divorce, Then Recants

In the wake of accusations ranging from sexual misconduct to Ponzi schemes, Bishop Eddie Long's wife on Friday filed for divorce—and then changed her mind within hours.

Vanessa Long, wife of the defamed megachurch bishop, announced her intention to divorce her husband on Friday morning.

"After a great deal of deliberation and prayer, I have decided to terminate my marriage to Bishop Eddie L. Long. Accordingly, I authorized my attorneys to file for divorce on December 1, 2011," Vanessa Long said in a statement. "It is my sincere hope that this matter can be resolved expeditiously, harmoniously and fairly. I ask that you respect my privacy and that of my family, as my attorneys and I have agreed that will not try this case in the media, and I do not intend to make any further statements concerning this matter."

However, her decision was short-lived. Within hours, she issued another statement reversing the first.

"Upon prayerful reflection, I have reconsidered and plan to withdraw my petition for divorce from my husband, Bishop Eddie L. Long," she said. "I love my husband. I believe in him and admire his strength and courage." The second statement was delivered in an email complete with the church's logo.

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 in Lithonia, Ga. But the stress of the varied accusations against her husband may have driven Vanessa Long to seek divorce.

Four men—all former members of Long's church now in their early 20s—claimed earlier this year 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. Because the men were over the age of consent in Georgia, which is 16, no criminal charges were filed.

In June, rumors floated around that the bishop's wife had left him. Although New Birth typically does not respond to rumors, the church felt it needed to address the reports, which bloggers are basing on anonymous sources.

"That claim is completely and absolutely false," according to a published statement from church spokesman Art Franklin. "Mrs. Long is very much a loving, dedicated and committed wife and mother."

It is unclear why Vanessa Long suddenly changed her mind. Stay tuned to Charisma News for updates.