

Bishop Eddie Long's Wife Dismisses Divorce Case

Vanessa Long filed for divorce from her husband, **Bishop Eddie Long**, in December after recanting her initial announcement. Last week she changed her mind again.

According to Dekalb County court filings that were later confirmed by Eddie Long's attorneys, the divorce petition has been dismissed. The bishop is the senior pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Lithonia, Ga., a suburb of Atlanta.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports that online postings dated Feb. 13 in the case of **Long vs. Long** indicate the petition was "dismissed without prejudice," which means the case may be reinstituted or refiled in the future.

Lawrence Cooper, one of Eddie Long's lawyers, told the AJC that Vanessa Long had asked that the **divorce petition** be dismissed. He declined to comment on whether or not the couple has been reunited. Vanessa Long's lawyers declined to make any comment to the newspaper.

Vanessa Long announced she was seeking to end her 21-year-marriage after "a great deal of deliberation and prayer" on Dec. 2. In a statement later that same day, she was quoted as saying that upon further "prayerful reflection," she was withdrawing the divorce petition.

"I love my husband," she said. "I believe in him and admire his strength and courage." Vanessa Long said her decision to seek a divorce was driven by "years of attacks in the media that frustrated and overwhelmed me." She said she and her megachurch-pastor husband had "mutually agreed to find healing."

Then, even later on Dec. 2, her attorneys announced that Vanessa Long was proceeding with the divorce “consistent with her original [statement] made this morning.”

The charismatic bishop vowed his unwavering love for his wife later that week. “Vanessa is, and has always been, a loving, dedicated and committed wife and mother,” Eddie Long said. “My love for her is deep and unwavering. It remains our sincere desire to continue working together in seeking God’s will in these circumstances.”

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.”

Four men—all former members of Long’s church now in their early 20s—filed a lawsuit in September 2010 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. Because the men were over the age of consent in Georgia, which is 16, no criminal charges were filed.

Long was also sued last year for an alleged role in a Ponzi scheme—just weeks after he settled a \$2 million lawsuit involving a real estate venture. Recently, a video of him being crowned king by Rabbi Ralph Messer went viral and stirred up a media frenzy.

The bishop announced to his church shortly after his wife filed for divorce that he would be taking a leave of absence to deal with “family issues.” He returned to the pulpit on New Year’s Eve, less than a month later.