

Bishop Eddie Long's Wife Offers 'No Hope of Reconciliation'

There's no hope of reconciliation. At least that's the legal message Vanessa Long is sending to her husband Bishop Eddie Long in divorce papers she filed in Georgia.

After prayerful consideration, Long on Friday announced plans to divorce her megachurch pastor husband. Within hours, Long appeared to recant in an email complete with New Birth Missionary Baptist church logos.

But Long's attorneys set the record straight in a third statement that made it crystal clear: The church's first lady is indeed putting an end to her 21-year marriage to the scandalized minister.

"Mrs. Long continues to hope that this matter may be resolved expeditiously, harmoniously and fairly; however, she has determined that dismissal of her divorce petition is not appropriate at this time," Kilpatrick Townsend partner Michael W. Tyler said in a prepared statement first published in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. "To avoid any undue confusion, Mrs. Long's future statements, if any, will be issued through her attorneys."

According to the divorce filing, Long, 53, claims her marriage is "irretrievably broken" with "no hope of reconciliation." The petition also reveals the New Birth leaders have been in a "state of separation."

In June, rumors floated around that the bishop's wife had left him. At that time, New Birth spokesman Art Franklin said "the claim is completely and absolutely false" and insisted that Long was "very much a loving, dedicated and committed wife and

mother.”

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, 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.

Long did not indicate whether she felt the accusations were true. In her original statement, however, she said that “years of attacks in the media that frustrated and overwhelmed her” were at the root of her prayerful decision.