

Long steps aside from Ga. church to work on marriage

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(RNS) Bishop Eddie Long remains as senior pastor of his Georgia megachurch as he deals with a divorce petition from his wife, who had momentarily called off plans to leave him.

"Rumors that Bishop Eddie L. Long has stepped down as senior pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church are completely false," his church announced on Sunday (Dec. 4). "As any loving and committed husband would do, Bishop Long will take some time to focus on his family but he will continue to be the senior pastor of New Birth."

On Friday, Vanessa Long, an elder at the church in Lithonia, Ga., issued a statement saying she had authorized her lawyers to file for divorce. But later Friday, the church released a statement on her behalf saying she had changed her mind and would withdraw her petition.

By day's end, the divorce plans were back on, according to a statement from her lawyer.

Eddie Long issued a statement Friday declaring his "unwavering" love for his wife. "It remains our sincere desire to continue working together in seeking God's will in these circumstances," he said.

In May, her husband reached out-of-court settlements with four young men who alleged he used money and gifts to coerce them into sexual relationships.