

Eddie Long's wife withdraws divorce petition

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(RNS) The wife of Bishop Eddie Long, a Georgia megachurch pastor who was accused of sexual misconduct by four young men, has reconsidered her plans to divorce him.

"Upon prayerful reflection, I have reconsidered and plan to withdraw my petition for divorce from my husband," said Vanessa Long, in a statement released Friday (Dec. 2) by New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Lithonia, Ga.

Eddie Long is senior pastor of the Atlanta-area megachurch and Vanessa Long is an elder there.

"I love my husband. I believe in him and admire his strength, and courage," Long said.

Earlier on Friday, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that she had authorized her lawyers to file for divorce. But the newer statement attributed her previous decision to her frustration with "attacks in the media" that she said overwhelmed her.

"I love my family and church family, New Birth Missionary Baptist Church," she wrote. "Therefore, my husband and I have mutually agreed to find healing from these attacks."

In May, Eddie Long reached out-of-court settlements with the men who were once considered his "spiritual sons." They alleged he used money and gifts to coerce them into sexual relationships.

The Longs were married in 1990 and have four children.