

COGIC reinstates bishop after criminal charges dropped

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NEW ORLEANS (RNS) The Church of God in Christ has lifted the suspension of a New Orleans bishop after a judge ruled that the charges of forcible rape, sexual battery and indecent behavior brought against him were too old to prosecute.

A Tuesday (March 6) statement from the church said its General Board had removed the suspension against Bishop Charles E. Brown and would have no further comment. The statement did not indicate that the denomination sought to interview the alleged victims. Brown was unavailable.

Brown, 59, leads two Pentecostal churches: Full Gospel Church of God in Christ in New Orleans and Williams Memorial Temple Church of God in Christ in Houston. He is also the jurisdictional bishop for the New Orleans area.

Brown was arrested last June on a complaint by an unidentified woman who said he had molested her as a minor. COGIC officials suspended him in September, shortly after the allegations became public.

Afterward, two other women came forward with allegations of sexual misconduct. He was indicted on a charge of forcible rape in one of the encounters.

Prosecutors also filed four charges of indecent behavior or sexual battery. All of the crimes allegedly took place between 1977 and 1989. Brown denied the charges and pleaded not guilty.

Criminal District Court Judge Karen Herman ruled that the statute of limitations, as written when the crimes allegedly were committed, long ago ran out. At that time, the victims were required to report them no later than 10 years after they turned 17.