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# Gibbs jailed for assaulting young girls

Posted By LINDA RICHARDSON, THE SAULT STAR

Updated 8 months ago

Wiping away tears, the five women hugged and comforted each other Thursday as they watched a city police court officer push Kenneth Gibbs' wheelchair out of the second-floor courtroom.

Their 77-year-old former minister was headed first to the courthouse cells -- and then to jail -- to begin serving a federal penitentiary term for molesting them when they were young girls.

Superior Court Justice Edward Koke sentenced the one-time Anglican priest to three and a half years in prison for sex offences he committed in Chapleau and Elliot Lake in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Belleville resident was convicted in November of eight counts of indecent assault and the judge imposed concurrent terms for each of the offences.

"It's been a long time coming. It's been 40 years for me," one of the victims, who can't be identified by court order, said in an interview following the sentencing.

"It's been a very painful time. God willing he won't be allowed to be around children again."

Gibbs served as minister of St. John's Anglican Church in Chapleau from 1966 to 1971 and was at St. Peter the Apostle Church in

Elliot Lake from 1971 to 1980.

The offences occurred between 1969 and 1978.

The victim, who spoke to The Sault Star, said that if something had happened after her mother called the bishop about what Gibbs was doing to her and her sister, these other victims wouldn't be here.

Before he was sentenced, Gibbs was given an opportunity to speak, but indicated through his lawyer that he had nothing to say.

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The judge later noted that Gibbs showed "virtually no remorse."

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**HORNEPAYNE CENTRE, 42 DAYS, TWENTY-NINE FOR BANK**  
 There are only forty-two days left before the Hornepayne Town Centre closes its doors, and even less, twenty-nine days before the CIBC Bank pulls up stake and moves all accounts left to its Branch in Hearst. While both events have mostly

**The Melodic Noise of 'Glee'**  
 Once upon a time, high school drama was bleak and boring with the common jocks vs. geeks plot taking up most of preteen entertainment. But then, Disney came up with the "he said, she said" tale choreographed to the tune of sappy and snappy slightly passable pop songs. In a post High School Mus

**soup kitchen**  
 A great article on Emile Philips and the Soup Kitchen. I have been away from the Sault for many years. I have known of the Soup Kitchen and am happy to see they are still doing their good works.

**ALL THIS MAKES YOU WONDER**  
 There have been two announcements in the "Soe News" this summer out of MPP Oraziotti's office, concerning millions for the north and in particular Sault St. Marie Ontario. The first notice said \$90 million for Northern job creation, infrastructure and commun

**HORNEPAYNE TOWN CENTRE COMPLEX UPDATE**  
 Although there is not much to update on Plan "A" of the Hornepayne Town Centre, which would be the sale of the complete building, a local Economic Development Committee has made some progress with Plan "B", which is to sever the Apartment

Referring to the women's victim impact statements, which they read in court Wednesday, Koke described the effects of Gibbs' actions on the victims as "devastating."

Gibbs "took away my innocence," "destroyed my future with a man," "destroyed my spirit," Koke quoted from the statements where the women detailed the emotional, psychological and physical harm the minister had caused.

Prosecutor Mike Kelly had been seeking a five-to-seven-year prison term.

Defence counsel Andre Berthelot had proposed a sentence of two years less a day, which would be served in a provincial facility.

When he imposed sentence, Koke cited the accused's age and bad health, as well as his lack of a criminal record.

Gibbs has coronary artery disease, takes 15 medications a day and suffers from post polio syndrome.

Because of his client's physical challenges Berthelot had suggested that Gibbs serve his time in protective custody.

Given the nature of the offences, Koke said he "couldn't disagree" with that suggestion.

Koke described Gibbs as a study in contrasts, a man, who except for "his sordid past" in the life of these children, was highly regarded in the community.

"Not withstanding his very serious transgressions, he has been the source of considerable good."

During the trial, the women described incidents where Gibbs fondled their breasts or vagina or exposed himself when they were children.

A 45-year-old woman testified Gibbs regularly played what he called the "worm game" with her from the time she was eight to 12 years old.

She said he digitally penetrated her while he placed her hand on his penis and moved it up and down.

Another victim, now 40, told the court about a "secret tickle game" Gibbs would play with her during family visits to the church rectory in Elliot Lake.

The woman said she was about six or seven when Gibbs would have her sit on his lap, then put his hands in her pants and touch her vagina.

On Thursday, Koke told the victims he was 'very impressed" and "very proud of you all."

They had made themselves vulnerable by coming forward, but had assisted society "by creating awareness of the effects of this kind of activity on young people," he said.

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