
Anglican church, former minister sued

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Five women are suing their former minister, imprisoned last year for molesting them when they were young girls, and the Anglican Church of Canada.

The lawsuit, against Kenneth Gibbs, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Diocese of Moosonee and the Synod of the Diocese of Algoma, was filed in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in Toronto in July.

Gibbs, a Belleville, Ont., resident was convicted in November of eight counts of indecent assault following a trial in Sault Ste. Marie.

In December, the former priest, 77, was sentenced to three and a half years in prison for the sex offences he committed in Chapleau and Elliot Lake in the 1960s and 1970s.

The five victims from that trial, along with a sixth woman, have launched the civil lawsuit.

They are each seeking \$2.5 million -- \$1 million from Gibbs, \$1 million from the Anglican Church and two dioceses and \$500,000 in punitive damages.

Stacey Stevens, one of the lawyers with the Toronto-based firm of Thomson, Rogers, which represents the women, says the defendants have yet to file a response to the statement of claim.

The offences involving the five women occurred between 1969 and 1978.

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.

During the trial, the women described incidents in which Gibbs fondled their breasts or vaginas or exposed himself when they were children.

Following his convictions in the Sault, Gibbs pleaded guilty in January in a Timmins courtroom to two counts of indecent assault.

These offences, which involved two young female parishioners, occurred in Chapleau when he was minister at St. John's.

A further two months incarceration was tacked on to the prison term he received in December.

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