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[Home](#) / [Archive](#) Priest found guilty of molesting parishioners

# Priest found guilty of molesting parishioners

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LINDA RICHARDSON

The Sault Star

A former Anglican priest was found guilty Monday of molesting five young female parishioners in the 1960s and 1970s.

Kenneth Gibbs was convicted of eight counts of indecent assault, offences that occurred when he was a minister at churches in Chapleau and Elliot Lake.

Superior Court Justice Edward Koke found the 76-year-old Belleville resident not guilty of one charge involving a sixth complainant.

Four of the now middle-age victims, comforted the sobbing, shaking 41-year-old woman after the judge said he was left with a reasonable doubt as to whether the Crown had proven its case on the count involving her.

A publication ban prohibits reporting any evidence that might identify the victims.

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.

He will return to the Sault Ste. Marie courthouse Dec. 2 for sentencing.

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**Articles & Blogs**

**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

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Prosecutor Mike Kelly asked the judge to remand Gibbs in custody.

"He's now been found guilty," the assistant Crown attorney said, indicating "the Crown will be asking for a substantial custodial sentence."

As an alternative if the court wasn't inclined to do that, Kelly suggested Gibbs be placed on a recognizance with conditions.

Koke opted for a \$5,000 (no deposit) recognizance, with conditions and a requirement that Gibbs turn over his passport to Belleville police.

During a nine-day trial in September, the six 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 vicim, 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.

When he testified Gibbs denied the allegations, but admitted to touching one complainant on three occasions.

Koke pointed to the evasiveness and inconsistencies in Gibbs' testimony and called the former minister's version of one of the incidents "simply not believable."

He also referred to Gibbs' evidence about a phone call he received from a mother of one of the girls and a church warden who received a complaint from the woman.

Gibbs indicated he took no steps to clear the air with the family or the warden.

"He stated that he treated the complaint as a 'joke kind of thing,'" Koke said.

"If in fact there was no merit to these allegations I find his response thereto, or lack of response thereto, incomprehensible."

One would think if Gibbs was innocent of such serious allegations he would have gone out of his way to assert his innocence and take affirmative steps to preserve his relationship with the family and his reputation in the community, Koke said.

In describing the testimony of the complainants, the judge used words such as credible, straight forward and clear, with no "hostility or anger towards Rev. Gibbs."

He noted similarities involving five of the victims:

All were members of Gibbs' church and he occupied a position of authority and trust to them;

All were prepubescent when the incidents occurred;

All testified about incidents that occurred in the church building or rectory on Sundays;

The touching occurred on a regular and frequent basis over an extended period of time;

Other members of the congregation or family members were nearby when the touching took place.

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