

## CASE 13

**Case 13: Complaint of TE Donald A. Codling, et al. Against the Presbytery of Eastern Canada**

Case 13 was presented by TE E. Crowell Cooley, who began with prayer;

**Case 13: Complaint of TE Donald A. Codling, et al. Against Eastern Canada**

We, the undersigned, being members of the presbytery of Eastern Canada, hereby complain against the action of the presbytery of Eastern Canada at its meeting in Toronto on April 29, 1983, at which it wrongfully failed to uphold the gospel call of candidate Ron Harris, and declined to proceed to his licensure.

**Historical Overview:**

Mr. Harris appeared as a candidate before presbytery at its meeting in Newcastle, August 24-26, 1982, and completed part of his examinations for licensure. The remainder of his examinations were left to an adjourned meeting of presbytery in Sydney, N.S., on October 23rd, 1982. In the interim, Mr. Harris was permitted to work with a recently gathered core group in Timmins, Ont., where there was an urgent need, with the clear provision that if in the end his examinations were not satisfactorily completed, presbytery could not allow him to continue there. At the meeting in Sydney his examinations were sustained, and his inward call to the ministry upheld by a majority of those voting. However, the court was sufficiently divided on the latter issue that it was agreed to reconsider his inward call at the April meeting of presbytery. The Kitchener session was instructed to re-appoint him to Timmins until that time.

On April 29, 1983, meeting in Toronto, presbytery again voted (8 to 7) to uphold Mr. Harris' call to the ministry. However, at the same meeting the standing rules of presbytery had been amended to require a 2/3 majority for the acceptance of candidates. Not having gained such a majority, Mr. Harris' request for licensure was denied at that time. However, in view of the awkward character of the situation and the prospect of a complaint to General Assembly, it was agreed, with his consent, to continue Mr. Harris in Timmins until after the meeting of Assembly.

**Grounds for the complaint:**

1) The change in the standing rules, which barred Mr. Harris from licensure, was illegal, according to *Robert's Rules of Order*, section 45, which requires notice in writing at the meeting prior to any meeting at which such rules are to be changed.

2) Data pertinent to the issue, which tended to answer the objections to licensure, was not considered prior to the decision; in particular, a letter from TE Terry Gyger of MNA, assessing very favourably Mr. Harris' work in Timmins, was not heard despite requests that it be read.

3) Requests from at least two parties that Mr. Harris be asked to preach at this presbytery meeting in view of questions about his preaching were effectively blocked by the clerk of presbytery.

4) Complaints against Mr. Harris that in a ministry with a special emphasis on counseling he unduly divides the work of the ministry do not justify denial of his licensure, especially in view of the fact that his observed practice clearly demonstrates a full and well rounded pastoral practice.

5) Objections that his preaching is not evangelistic are based on samples of newspaper sermons directed primarily at a believing audience and a sermon preached to presbytery with a similar assumption. No notice had been given that presbytery desired to hear a sermon focusing on conversion of the lost. (Although this was obviously an issue, a suggestion to hear a taped sermon was left unheeded.) The essence of the gospel was nonetheless visible in the sample sermons.

6) Objections that the candidate cannot clearly express the doctrines of sovereign grace are based on one sentence on one of the above mentioned newspaper sermons, a sentence which the candidate readily confessed was poorly expressed, when his attention was drawn to it. It in no way demonstrates inability to express the doctrines of God's sovereignty or hesitation about such doctrine, as has been evident both in the candidate's examinations and in his work in Timmins.

**Conclusion:**

We understand that a special meeting of presbytery may be requested to license Mr. Harris, in view of a visit to the Timmons congregation which clearly showed one opponent to his licensure the erroneousness of the objections against the candidate. If presbytery fails thus to redress its error, we respectfully request the General Assembly to take the steps necessary to correct presbytery's action.

Respectfully submitted:

TE DONALD A. CODLING

TE ROBERT A. MCPHERSON

TE HOWARD MCPHEE

TE SCOTT ROBERTSON

RE TOM DALE

RE DON VANCE

## ADJUDICATION OF CASE 13

## I. STATEMENT OF FACTS:

A complaint was brought against the Presbytery of Eastern Canada for its action in denying licensure to Ron Harris at its April 1983 Spring Stated Meeting.

## II. JUDGMENT:

The judgment of the commission is to sustain the complaint in part as follows:

1. The change in the standing rules, which barred Mr. Harris from licensure, was illegal according to *Robert's Rules of Order*, section 45, which requires notice in writing at the meeting prior to any meeting at which such rules are to be changed. Sustained 13-1-1
2. Data pertinent to the issue, which tended to answer the objections to licensure, was not considered prior to the decision; in particular, a letter from TE Terry Gyger of MNA, assessing very favourably Mr. Harris' work in Timmins, was not heard despite requests that it be read. Not sustained 7-8
3. Requests from at least two parties that Mr. Harris be asked to preach at this presbytery meeting in view of questions about his preaching were effectively blocked by the clerk of presbytery. Not sustained 2-12-1
4. Complaints against Mr. Harris that in a ministry with a special emphasis on counseling he unduly divides the work of the ministry do not justify denial of his licensure, especially in view of the fact that his observed practice clearly demonstrates a full and well-rounded pastoral practice. Sustained 13-1-1
5. Objections that his preaching is not evangelistic are based on samples of newspaper sermons directed primarily at a believing audience and a sermon preached to presbytery with a similar assumption. No notice had been given that presbytery desired to hear a sermon focusing on conversion of the lost. (Although this was obviously an issue, a suggestion to hear a taped sermon was left unheeded.) The essence of the gospel was nonetheless visible in the sample sermons. Sustained 9-4-2
6. Objections that the candidate cannot clearly express the doctrines of sovereign grace is based on one sentence in one of the above-mentioned newspaper sermons, a sentence which the candidate readily confessed was poorly expressed, when his attention was drawn to it. It in no way demonstrates inability to express the doctrines of God's sovereignty or hesitation about such doctrine, as has been evident both in the candidate's examinations and in his work in Timmins. Sustained 12-2-1 *Adopted*

## III. RECOMMENDATION

We strongly urge and respectfully request the Presbytery of Eastern Canada to re-examine Mr. Harris for licensure. This should be done for the purity and peace of the Presbytery of Eastern Canada and the good of Mr. Harris and the PCA. *Adopted*

## IV. MINUTE EXPLANATORY:

The Eleventh General Assembly's position on re-examination of Mr. Ron Harris by Eastern Canada Presbytery is based on the following grounds:

1. Original examination was spread over three presbytery meetings (8 month period) with portions of the exam sustained at one meeting and then reopened at a later meeting. This demonstrates an uncertainty by the presbytery and caused an undue burden on Mr. Harris.
2. Standing Rules of Eastern Canada Presbytery were changed to increase the percentage vote required to sustain a licensure exam during the meeting at to which a vote to license was taken. This is contrary to *Robert's Rules of Order*

- (edition being used and applied by the Eastern Canada Presbytery) as noted in the minutes of that meeting.
3. There are substantially differing views within the Eastern Canada Presbytery as to the qualification of Mr. Harris with regard to pastoring the Timmins congregation. Re-examination accomplished during a single presbytery meeting would permit thorough evaluation of all issues so that a final decision could be made.
  4. A minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ must use and develop all of the gifts which God has given Him in his ministry. If the gift of counseling (pastoring) is the stronger, the Lord will and is using the ministry of pastoral counseling to evangelize those seeking help and to shepherd (*BCO* 8-3 and 8-5) His flock. Biblical counseling is complementary to preaching. Private admonition is the logical follow-up to public exposition.
  5. We call the attention of the Presbytery of Eastern Canada to paragraph 19:2:B,D of the *BCO*. While proper historical-exegetical exposition and application of any particular passage in the 'whole counsel' may carry more or less of an evangelistic emphasis, it is felt that reference to *BCO* requirements (19:2-D) would help the Presbytery to adequately direct the candidate to address a particular passage that would satisfy the Presbytery in its primary concerns.

Ascension	TE E. Crowell Cooley, Chairman
Tennessee Valley	RE Sam H. Chester, Jr., Clerk
Great Lakes	TE Donald Remillard
Texas	TE Charles Cobb
Grace	TE Shelton Sanford
Louisiana	TE Tom Roberts
Westminster	TE Henry Johnson
New River	TE Fred McFarland
Mississippi alley	RE Jerry Tucker
Gulf Coast	RE Julian Gibson
Pacific	RE Stewart Fleeman
Central Carolina	RE Frank Summerville
Philadelphia	RE Paul Goldsborough
Central Georgia	RE George Nottingham
Siouxlands	RE Wendell Strasser
Western Carolinas	TE John Warren, Alternate

### CASES 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, REFERENCE 1

#### Cases 6, 8, 10, 12, 15 against the Presbytery of Central Carolina

TE James R. Simoneau presented the report, beginning with prayer.

### CASE 6

#### Complaint of the 'Determined Minority' of New Life Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC against the Judicial Commission of Central Carolina Presbytery.

Since the Judicial Commission has referred to this group of members of New Life Presbyterian Church as the 'Determined Minority,' (which title has been protested), we will use it for convenience sake. December 18, 1982.

The following complaint is filed against the Judicial Commission of Central Carolina Presbytery on behalf of the 'determined minority.'