



Parishoner Ann Capobianco read a prayer book in the pews of the darkened Saint Jeremiah's Church in Framingham on Friday. (Globe Staff Photo / John Tlumacki)

## **Framingham parish goes into vigil to protest closing**

**AP** Associated Press

**May 6, 2005**

FRAMINGHAM, Mass. --Parishioners at St. Jeremiah began a round-the-clock vigil on Friday to protest the Boston's archdiocese decision to close it and merge it with a cross-town parish, which parishioners said is in need of major repairs.

Mary Beth Carmody, co-chair of the St. Jeremiah parish appeal committee, said the move to St. George parish puts them in a church with inadequate handicapped access which needs \$800,000 in work.

By contrast, she said, St. Jeremiah is in "pristine condition."

St. Jeremiah is scheduled to close May 13. The church was originally scheduled to close in November, but won a reprieve so the archdiocese could review the situation.

"I think they wanted to wait us out," Carmody said. "They misunderstood where we were at."

The archdiocese released a statement saying that the church is working with the parish to prepare for the scheduled closing.

"We continue to recognize the difficulty and profound sadness associated with the closing of any parish," the statement said, "however, we hope the people of St. Jeremiah will find the strength and resolve to effect a peaceful, orderly and prayerful transition to the welcoming parish."

Framingham police Lt. Vincent Alfano said police were called to the church Friday afternoon after a report of people gathering, but left because there were no public safety problems.

"We have to remain a neutral party and they have to work it out between them," he said.

The archdiocese is closing about 80 churches in a reconfiguration brought on by financial pressure, declining attendance and a shortage of priests. Most have shut down quietly and on schedule.

Vigils are under way at seven other churches slated to close. In March, Archbishop Sean O'Malley reversed the closing of St. Albert the Great in Weymouth, and announced that St. Anselm church in Sudbury will reopen as a chapel with a regular Sunday Mass.

St. Jeremiah parishioner Grace Corrigan, mother of the late astronaut Christa McAuliffe who died in the Challenger explosion, said support for a vigil is strong. She said parishioners are hopeful they can sway the archdiocese if it "would understand there is so much history here, and how badly we all feel." ■

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