

*St. Jeremiah Appeal Committee
at St. Jeremiah Parish
41 Brook Street
Framingham, MA 01701*

December 17, 2004

Sister Janet Eisner SND
Emmanuel College
400 The Fenway
Boston, MA 02115

Re: St. Jeremiah Parish Closing

Dear Sister Eisner,

As co-chairperson of the advisory committee on church reconfiguration, the Appeal Committee of St. Jeremiah Parish is asking for your committee's review and reconsideration of our parish closing. Although we understand the needs of the Archdiocese of Boston to reconfigure due to financial problems, declining attendance and the shortage of priests, the decision to close our parish is not based on full or correct information. As is the case with many other parishes which are closing, St. Jeremiah is a vibrant parish in excellent financial and physical condition. The decision to close St. Jeremiah will form the largest parish, in terms of recorded members, in Framingham at St. George Parish. St. George has no room for physical growth, is in disrepair and is located in a high traffic area at an intersection determined as dangerous by the Town of Framingham. Repairs to accommodate the new large parish will cost the Archdiocese approximately \$1M. Thus, we request a further review of the church configuration in North Framingham.

Our request is based on the following:

1. Incomplete and flawed data was used as the basis for the cluster recommendation. The Framingham cluster report contains parish financial, attendance and program participation figures that were submitted by each parish. This data was not gathered in a consistent manner and does not provide for accurate comparisons. One example is the physical condition of each parish as reported by the pastor. The overall condition of each parish was reported as "good". The evaluations were completely subjective and varied widely. A brief visit to each parish would evidence this fact. An objective facilities study should have been completed in full to determine the condition of each parish and the work required should the parish remain open. The fact that it will take almost \$1M to renovate St. George to accommodate such a large population underscores the flaws in the decision.

The Framingham cluster report is incomplete. The information provided does not include town growth, traffic and handicapped accessibility. It was not included and therefore, not considered. Moreover, very serious traffic and safety concerns result from the closing of St. Jeremiah. This data should have been, at least, considered. A visit to North Framingham would greatly inform the committee of these flaws.

2. Flaws occurred in the cluster process. Many flaws occurred during the cluster meeting. The primary flaw was the exclusion of St Anselm in the Framingham cluster. The Framingham cluster group included 5 churches whose property is located within the town of Framingham. However, St. Anselm in Sudbury serves a section of North Framingham – an area previously served by St. Jeremiah and St. George. Due to the growth in the area over 30 years ago, parishioners were “moved” from St. Jeremiah and St. George to St. Anselm. The impact of closing St. Anselm was not considered in our process. With the closing of St. Anselm, there is greater demand on the two (one since closing St. Jeremiah) remaining churches in North Framingham. More detail on our cluster process can be provided at a meeting with you or a committee representative
3. Problems in merging church activities with our welcoming parish of St George. In anticipation of St. Jeremiah’s closing and in order to protect its students from a mid-year transition, St. Jeremiah combined its Religious Education program with St. George and St. Anselm to begin the school year. The program also includes students who transferred from St. Bridget’s Parish due to philosophical differences. Thus, the student population at St. George has more than tripled from **125** students in 2003-2004 to **540** students for the present school year. There are many children that are home schooled or not enrolled due to the congestion at St. George. The potential student population is approximately 800.

The increase number of students in the joint program compounds the already crowded traffic conditions in the Saxonville area of Framingham. St. George is located at the intersection of Hamilton and School Streets in Framingham. Parishioners traveling from St. Jeremiah Parish must access St. George’s through Saxonville and also the intersection of School and Concord Streets on Route 126. These intersections are already heavily traveled. An additional complication is an already undersized parking lot adjacent to St. George’s and the small parking lot across School Street that requires parishioners to cross over a busy School Street to get to St. George’s. On November 30, 2004, at the time Religious Education classes were leaving St. George, an elderly woman was killed crossing at the intersection of Hamilton and Old Connecticut Path. This is just 400 yards from where parents and their children are exiting the church. We also have reports of several “near misses” in the parking lot at St. George. This is a serious safety issue.

Moreover, St. George’s has only 7 classrooms to accommodate the student body of over 500. Classes are conducted in two sessions on Sunday morning, as well as

Sunday evening and Monday and Tuesday afternoon and evenings. Primary school students attend classes on Sunday mornings from 9-10:15 a.m. and 11-12:15 a.m. between the 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Masses. Parishioners attending Mass further complicate the traffic and parking problems. Classes are also be conducted on Monday and Tuesday afternoons with a release time of 5:15 p.m. – which means students are released into an already backed-up Hamilton/School Street intersection during rush hour. All of these are serious safety issues.

These are just the highlights of our concerns. We request the opportunity to present all of our concerns to the committee or its representatives. We can also provide a full report of the data and information we have collected to date.

The decision to close St. Jeremiah (and St. Anselm) and to merge three parishes into one at St. George is deeply flawed and will adversely affect our ability to minister to the people of North Framingham. Thank you for you consideration and attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

Mary Beth Carmody,
Jackie Lemmerhirt and
The Parishioners
of ST. JEREMIAH PARISH

Cc: Mr. Peter Meade
Sister Janet Eisner