

St. Jeremiah's parishioners remain hopeful

By Jennifer Kavanaugh / Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM -- St. Jeremiah parishioners settled into the second day of their vigil yesterday, as they continue their fight to keep the parish from closing this week.

About 10 people slept over at the church Friday night, and yesterday people were preparing for last night's Mass and the final Mass scheduled this morning at 10:15, said Jackie Lemmerhirt, co-chairwoman of the St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee.

With a Wednesday deadline to appeal the church's closure, parishioners had another copy of their petition hand-delivered to the Boston Archdiocese in Brighton yesterday, after they couldn't confirm the first copy was received by church officials, Lemmerhirt said.

"I think we have very high hopes that once they examine our arguments, they will not close this church," she said. "Period."

Parishioners rushed to the church Friday after hearing that the archdiocese was about to change the locks two days before the final Mass.

No one showed up to change the locks, but the parishioners prevented the church secretary from locking the doors and made plans to remain at the church for the foreseeable future.

The archdiocese had planned to close St. Jeremiah as part of a massive restructuring that involves the closing of dozens of parishes, as the church tries to stem financial losses. In appealing the closure of St. Jeremiah's parishioners say their church is in good financial shape and would not drain the archdiocese's resources by remaining open.

St. Jeremiah parishioners are looking to the success other vigils have had in keeping their churches open, Lemmerhirt said, and keep in touch with people participating in other vigils throughout the archdiocese.

"Absolutely, we are comparing notes," she said.

Lemmerhirt has belonged to St. Jeremiah's for the past 18 years, and said the closure would mean more than just having to find someplace else to go to Mass.

"It's a community of friends," she said. "It feels like home."

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