

Church vigil gaining strength

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM -- An almost new office table, a new phone line with an answering machine and two buckets for financial support are just a few of the tangible signs the appeal at St. Jeremiah's is built to last.

And with an average of 50 people at each of two Communion services over the weekend, Appeals Committee co-Chairwoman Jackie Lemmerhirt said supporters are being added every day.

"We've got a lot of new names on the list (for church coverage during the around-the-clock vigil) and some new people staying overnight," she said.

The committee will host Holy Communion services again this weekend at 4:30 p.m. Saturday and 10:15 a.m. Sunday, this time with St. Jeremiah's parishioners taking the lead after learning the ropes last weekend, Lemmerhirt said.

Some wondered aloud yesterday why the Rev. Ronald Calhoun, the pastor from St. Jeremiah's who now works at St. George's as co-pastor with the Rev. Frank O'Brien, still was living in the St. Jeremiah's rectory after Friday's closing.

Archdiocese policy at other closing parishes has been for priests to stay for a week or longer, said spokesman Terry Donilon. "It's not unusual that he would still be there," he said of Calhoun. "We've got to think on a human scale. They've got to transition, too."

Efforts to reach Calhoun and O'Brien yesterday were unsuccessful.

As she had during several of the previous 10 days of the vigil, original parishioner Gwen Knapp sat in one of the meeting rooms yesterday afternoon, putting the final touches on one of her patented quilts.

"I just feel an awful loss," said Knapp, when asked why she is supporting the effort.

Among the new additions at the back of the church is a book in which those who stop by can write their historical recollections about the early days of St. Jeremiah's, which opened in July 1958.

Those so-called "Treasures of St. Jeremiah" will make for some interesting conversations, appeal committee members say.

Also finding prominent spots in the church are two buckets seeking money for the St. Jeremiah Survival Fund. On the dry-erase board just outside the church doors is a list of items "We Need..." for the vigil.

The first item on the list, which includes half a dozen requests for paper products and other necessities for the long-term fight, was "Your prayers and support."

Among the 185 guests signed up in the book by yesterday afternoon were a handful of visitors from St. Anselm's in Sudbury.

The table set up in the common gathering room came from Appeals Committee member William Sell, who snagged the piece from his former employer before the company went out of business.

The committee is also firming up plans for a weekly movie and pizza night, which will likely begin Friday. The effort is one way to involve children in the vigil.

Lemmerhirt said the move to make the vigil more permanent is nice.

"We wanted to wait until after (the decree of suppression took effect at noon) Friday to see what happened," she said. "It really doesn't feel any different to me."

For more information about the vigil, call 508-877-0756, the phone line now in operation at the parish.

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