

## Church group raises money for court fight

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

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**F**RAMINGHAM -- A handful of parishioners from St. Jeremiah will start a nonprofit organization to help pay for the legal battle and other expenses not tied directly to keeping the church open.

The Friends of St. Jeremiah, which has seen checks for \$1 all the way up to \$500, will remain separate from the St. Jeremiah Survival Fund, which is highlighted by buckets at the parish for needs during the vigil, which now has lasted two weeks.

"Without even trying, we've raised about \$1,500 already," said Friends co-founder Tom Tierney, an original parishioner who is working with Mary Ann Mendenhall and Peg Bower on the organization.

"I think there's a groundswell. There's some tillable soil out there just waiting for cultivation," said Tierney, who said the organization will be modeled after one used at St. Albert the Great in Weymouth during its closing.

Nothing has been formalized, but Tierney said he expects the group to put out some mailings, seek personal donations from friends and supporters and also go after more significant contributions from anyone who may be willing to help.

The lawsuit filed Friday in Middlesex Superior Court seeks a declaratory judgment that the parishioners own the parish and includes an injunction to prevent the removal of sacred objects until all appeals have been exhausted.

Early estimates for the legal fees are about \$50,000 through Boston-based Galvin and Ames, with St. Jeremiah parishioners picking up one-quarter of the tab, or about \$12,500.

"(The nonprofit organization is) needs-driven," said Tierney, one of the plaintiff's in the lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Boston. "I believe very strongly in the lawsuit. It has to be funded."

Jackie Lemmerhirt, co-chairwoman of the Appeals Committee, said yesterday she welcomes and supports the efforts of the Friends. "There are people who are very interested in that aspect," she said.

Before wrapping up her time at the church yesterday, Mendenhall said she expects the vigil to go on for a while. "We're here for the long haul," she said.

With that in mind, the Appeals Committee will get computer access tomorrow in the church after adding a phone line and a pair of televisions earlier in the week.

Communion services are set for Saturday at 4:30 p.m. and Sunday at 10:15 a.m. Pizza and movie night makes its debut tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. with a showing of "The Incredibles."

The guest book hit 200 visitors yesterday, with Vartkess Tarbassian, an Armenian Apostolic, among those stopping by to support the cause.

"I'm very unhappy for the people of this parish," said Tarbassian. "I sympathize for their strife. I feel the Catholic Church especially in eastern Massachusetts has suffered dramatically from some pastoral shortcomings."

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

( (Craig MacCormack can be reached at 508-626-4429 or cmaccorm@cnc.com.) )

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