

Appeal committee preparing for long vigil

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM -- They may be waiting for a while for Pope Benedict XVI to visit, but members of the St. Jeremiah Appeal Committee will be ready for him if he comes by.

Among the bushel of name tags vigil attendees made as the around-the-clock watch enters its fifth week today is one for the new pontiff and another for the Rev. Ron Calhoun, the former pastor who now is at St. George's Church.

While Calhoun continues to live in the rectory next door to St. Jeremiah's, he has not stopped by the parish since the vigil began, at least not in sight of any regular attendees.

Last week, Calhoun or one of his associates came to the church to get his chalice and ciborium, although no one saw him when he was there.

Several members of the Appeal Committee have wondered why Calhoun is still living in St. Jeremiah's rectory even after the church was closed May 13, but archdiocese officials say pastors generally stay for at least a month.

This weekend is expected to be another busy one at St. Jeremiah's, with pizza and a movie for children starting tonight at 6:30 and Communion services tomorrow at 4:30 p.m. and Sunday at 10:15 a.m.

Appeal Committee member Lorraine Dray said she does not expect the services to end, even after archdiocesan officials said last month the exercise does not fulfill a Catholic's weekly obligation to attend Sunday Mass.

Many of the attendees at the Communion services, said Dray, are elderly and some of those are handicapped, making their ability to attend Mass at St. George's somewhat limited.

"Regardless of what (archdiocesan officials) say about Communion services, some people cannot get where they need to get (for Mass)," said Dray.

Members are also hoping vigil attendees will wear new buttons asking the Archdiocese of Boston to "Save St. Jeremiah and Christa's Bells," referring to the carillon bell sound dedicated to teacher-astronaut Christa McAuliffe, who grew up in the St. Jeremiah's parish.

Appeal Committee members hope those who want a button will donate at least \$1 to the effort to pay for utility bills and other day-to-day expenses tied to the vigil.

A sign near the basket where the pins are stored reads "Give A Buck, Get A Button."

About 280 people have signed the guest book at St. Jeremiah's.

Nightly rosary services continue at 7:30 with a Bible study offering set to debut June 15 at 8 p.m. Vigil attendees may also start a summer reading club.

"This church has never felt more peaceful," Dray said.

For more information about the vigil, call 508-877-0756 or log on to the Appeal Committee Web site, www.stjeremiah.org.

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