

St. George's attendance surges

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

Friday, June 10, 2005

FRAMINGHAM -- The closing of St. Jeremiah parish on May 8 has led to a Christmas-like surge in attendance each week at St. George's Church.

While St. George's had averaged 650 to 700 parishioners for Sunday Masses prior to St. Jeremiah being closed last month, these days the total has ballooned to more than 900 per week, said the Rev. Frank O'Brien.

St. George's might even add an extra Sunday Mass.

Jackie Lemmerhirt, co-chairwoman of the St. Jeremiah Appeal Committee, said yesterday she had no idea how many former St. Jeremiah parishioners have been going to St. George's since May 13.

"I have not attended or even gone near the place," she said. "I have no idea if (O'Brien's attendance reports are) true or not."

Lemmerhirt has been at the helm of the St. Jeremiah vigil, which started on May 6.

Masses at St. George's on May 15, the first week after some St. Jeremiah communicants began an around-the-clock vigil, attracted almost 1,000 people, said O'Brien, although he wasn't certain all the newcomers were from St. Jeremiah.

"There have been a lot of people we haven't seen before," the pastor said.

And while the May 15 services brought in several hundred new people -- "it was like a Christmas crowd for us," said O'Brien -- he disputes the rumors that there is a problem with attendees finding a parking space or a pew.

"There's still plenty of extra seats and plenty of parking," he said.

O'Brien also countered the assertion by St. Jeremiah vigil organizers that many of those parishioners have stopped going to Mass rather than going to St. George's on Sundays.

"It's just not true," he said.

The summer season and parishioners' vacation schedules may contribute to the extra room in the church now, said O'Brien. He and the Rev. Ron Calhoun, the former St. Jeremiah pastor who is now at St. George's, have talked about adding a fourth Sunday Mass in the fall to accommodate the extra people.

O'Brien said he has been impressed with the cooperative spirit shown by the choirs, lectors, Eucharistic ministers and ushers from the two churches, many of whom have had to adjust their routines with the congregations combined.

Each of the groups has met to hash out who will do what now that there are more resources than in the past, said O'Brien.

"It's worked out well," he said.

Meanwhile, Lemmerhirt said she sympathized with students and family members at Our Lady of Presentation School in Brighton, which Archbishop Sean O'Malley closed two days before the end of classes. He also canceled graduation in hopes of cutting off the chances of a vigil like those at several churches.

The school was among the church properties slated to close under a sweeping reorganization of parishes in the archdiocese. Terry Donilon, a spokesman for the archdiocese, called the decision by O'Malley "regrettable but necessary."

St. Jeremiah parishioners started their vigil two days before the final Masses at the church.

"We knew from watching what happened to the churches that closed in the fall that the archdiocese was coming out early to lock the door," said Lemmerhirt. "I guess they didn't realize it could happen to them, too."

Herald Interactive Tools



[Related articles](#)



[E-mail article to a friend](#)



[View graphic version](#)



[Post comments in the forums](#)






[Search site](#)



[Sign up for home delivery](#)

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

Related articles

-  [Locks changed at closed church](#)
-  [After thefts, vigil group is on alert](#)
-  [Canon lawyer sides with archdiocese on services](#)

Today's most read articles Updated 6:30 AM ET

1. [Police log from Friday, June 10, 2005](#)(146)
2. [Superintendents from three local schools honored](#)(108)
3. [Breast feeding moms back bill](#)(101)
4. [Recommended approach to rare bears](#)(87)
5. [Milford takes Long road](#)(74)

Search the site

[[contact us](#)] :: [[print advertising](#)] :: [[online advertising](#)] :: [[Browser Upgrade](#)] :: [[Jobs](#)] :: **Click here for home delivery** or call **1.800.982.4023**

© Copyright of CNC and Herald Interactive Advertising Systems, Inc.
No portion of townonline.com or its content may be reproduced without the owner's written permission. [Privacy Commitment](#)