

## O'Malley meeting has church hopeful

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

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**F**RAMINGHAM -- They have already made history, becoming the first church to get an extension on the appeal of its closing from Archbishop Sean O'Malley, so there's reason to feel good at St. Jeremiah's these days.

Jackie Lemmerhirt, co-chairwoman of the St. Jeremiah Appeal Committee, said yesterday she is excited about O'Malley having until Aug. 4 to mull whether to reopen the church.

St. Jeremiah's got a two-week extension in late June and a second one this week.

In the meantime, the group will continue to send O'Malley and members of the Meade-Eisner Reconfiguration Committee any information they can to help make the decision go their way.

"They obviously think we have valid concerns or they would've denied our appeal," said Lemmerhirt. "He's reached out to a lot of parishes, but not all of them. I think it says a lot about how he feels about this area."

O'Malley will meet with parishioners in vigil at St. Jeremiah's Church in an attempt to "resolve their concerns." He will also meet with parishioners and the parish council at St. George's, the parish that absorbed St. Jeremiah's.

Archdiocese of Boston spokesman Terry Donilon, who doesn't know when O'Malley will go to Framingham, said the visit is "an attempt to try to resolve the differences that are out there."

O'Malley has also granted permission to reinstall air conditioning at the church, which was removed in April. The church closed May 13, with the vigil starting a week earlier.

Parishioners at Sacred Heart Church in Lexington had offered to donate six window air conditioners when those at St. Jeremiah's were yanked out, but they didn't fit properly, Lemmerhirt said.

She took the decision to reinstall the central air as a good sign.

"Would you invest in a building you planned on closing?" she said. "You have to be optimistic. This is unprecedented."

Lemmerhirt said an independent consultant will also review the facilities of St. George's and St. Jeremiah's and determine whether St. George's can handle both congregations.

She also said her group requested the facilities review in October.

The Appeals Committee will host a meeting Sunday at 8 p.m. at the church to update parishioners on the latest developments. All are welcome.

Now at the two-month mark, Lemmerhirt said the vigil continues to go on with no interruptions. Lemmerhirt said new people have continued to join the rotation in recent weeks, such as teachers who are out of school for the summer.

Lemmerhirt has also noticed several people who attended Mass at the church before it closed are coming back to help after leaving it behind immediately after the May decision.

"A lot of people sense there's hope here," she said.

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This sign hangs at the entrance to St. Jeremiah's Church in Framingham. (Ken McGagh photo)

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