

O'Malley visits Framingham parish to review appeal

By Lisa Gentes / Daily News Staff

Monday, August 1, 2005

FRAMINGHAM -- Archbishop Sean O'Malley met with parishioners and officials from two Framingham parishes yesterday during a private meeting at St. George's Church.

During the hourlong afternoon meeting, O'Malley talked with members of the 20-member transition council, which has representatives from both St. George's and the former St. Jeremiah's. He then toured the School Street church and its rectory.

St. Jeremiah's has been closed since May, and St. George's has been working with the parish to accommodate its members.

"He's trying to get a clear understanding of what the situation is in Framingham," Bill Koffel, a deacon at St. George's Church, said following the meeting.

"We're waiting now for Archbishop Sean to decide how to handle the reconfiguration (in Framingham,)" said Koffel, who was a deacon at St. Jeremiah's before it closed.

"It went very well," O'Malley said after the meeting. He declined further comment, saying he was on his way to another event.

He is expected to announce by Thursday whether St. Jeremiah's will be reopened.

Due to the closure, the transition council formed in February and has been working to bring both parishes together, Koffel said. "The transition council has been working since before St. Jeremiah's closed to help make the transition from two to one," he said.

The Archdiocese of Boston made the decision to suppress St. Jeremiah's in May 2004 and officially closed the parish in May 2005. However, some parishioners have been holding vigil in the closed church since May 6.

On July 5, O'Malley accepted the recommendations of the Re-configuration Review Committee to reconsider an appeal from the parish. The parish and the archdiocese agreed to a 30-day extension to review the closing, which included meetings between O'Malley and parishioners from St. Jeremiah's and St. George's.

St. Jeremiah's Appeal Committee met with O'Malley last week, and he also met with representatives from St. Anselm's in Sudbury.

"We had a very good and productive meeting with Archbishop Sean," the deacon said. "We are very grateful that he came and took the time to see the church and meet with the council. And we await his decision."

(Lisa Gentes can be reached at 508-490-7461 or lgentes@cnc.com.)






Archbishop Sean O'Malley toured St. George's Church to decide if the plan to combine it with St. Jeremiah's should be instituted. (Milton Amador photo)

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