

Church gets a cool gift

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM -- With the closing date of their church drawing ever closer, St. Jeremiah's parishioners yesterday got a dose of good news when churchgoers in Lexington offered some air conditioners for their vigil.

Jackie Lemmerhirt, co-chairwoman of the St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee, said she got an e-mail from Shukong Ou from Sacred Heart Church in Lexington saying six medium-sized window units are available.

"The connection and networks we've developed has been amazing," said Lemmerhirt.

The central air conditioning system at St. Jeremiah was taken out a week or so ago and could be brought to St. George's Church in Framingham if it fits. Some on the Appeals Committee say it was taken out to make vigil-goers hot.

The Lexington air conditioners should be available in a few weeks, said Lemmerhirt. Four will come from a home that is being renovated and will get central air, she said.

"We saw this story last week and were talking about it over coffee and all of us were so outraged," said Ou, a member of the Friends of Sacred Heart. "We're all in this together, so there's a willingness to help each other.

"Whatever we have, we're perfectly happy to share," he said.

Also yesterday, the Appeals Committee sent its petition for revocation of the suppression decree to the archdiocese headquarters in Boston. A FedEx representative delivered it in the afternoon, said Lemmerhirt.

The appeal is based largely on information that the committee presented to members of the Meade-Eisner committee after the Archdiocese of Boston chose to close St. Jeremiah as part of the reconfiguration plan, she said.

The document argues the closing order "was issued based upon ignorance or error," citing two violations of canon law dealing with consultation with the Presbyterian Council of the archdiocese.

"We have quite a high degree of confidence in our appeal," said Lemmerhirt.

Archdiocese spokeswoman Molly Horton could not confirm if the appeal had reached the chancery, but said she would not comment on the substance even when it comes in.

If the nine-page appeal is rejected, said Lemmerhirt, the Appeals Committee will take its fight to the Vatican. That document is usually sent to Rome through the archbishop or cardinal to streamline the process, said Horton.

The Appeals Committee will have 30 days from receiving Archbishop Sean O'Malley's decision to decide whether to appeal to Rome, she said.

Other area churches that appealed their closings to the Vatican, including St. Anselm's in Sudbury, expect a decision by Tuesday, said Lemmerhirt. That ruling could determine whether St. Jeremiah would take its fight that far.

The recent appointment of Pope Benedict XVI could play a role in the appeal process, said Lemmerhirt. Some parishioners wondered how aware Pope John Paul II was of the Boston situation, especially as his health continued to fail.

"(Benedict) knows what's going on," said Lemmerhirt. "He'll definitely be putting his stamp on it. I don't know how that will go."

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

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St. Jeremiah's Church in Framingham is slated to close soon. (File photo)

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