

## Waitt: Remembering my church family

By **Elizabeth Waitt**/ Sitting In  
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**A**s I approach the one year anniversary of the closing of Sacred Heart Church in Medford, I find myself reflecting on what has been lost and what my future as a Catholic will be.

I talk to many people who were once lifelong parishioners of Sacred Heart and my heart breaks each and every time they tell the story of how hard it has been for them to find a new path, a new family of faith and a new life as a practicing Catholic.

I still feel a sense of loss. The archdiocese told us not to worry about our immediate pain, as it would pass in time. For myself, that really hasn't happened. I still feel the pain of "loss" every time I pass the building. I say building because it's not a church anymore.

I watched each week as new things began to happen. First the archdiocese realtors placed a huge black and white sign on the grass area telling all to call if they were interested in the property.

They removed the crying Virgin Mary and placed her in a new "home," leaving a cement slab where she once stood. They removed the signage. They sent out survey specialists to survey the land and measure for the new prospective owners.

Meanwhile, other churches were proclaiming victory for their sit-ins that changed the mind of Bishop Sean O'Malley. Good for them, I thought, they did it. With God by their side they stuck together and showed the archdiocese that they had no idea of the power of the people. They never gave up.

I think about the first meeting we had at Sacred Heart Memorial Day weekend, 2004 and how we too talked about sit-ins. Our pastor was away, wanting nothing to do with our endeavor.

The summer was slowly approaching and we felt we may have a chance, but then our pastor returned, angry and bitter over our desire to fight the archdiocese. He wrote a letter proclaiming his desire to close us down by July 26, 2004 "for the good of the people of the parish."

Little did he know then, or does he realize now, how very wrong he was to think he knew better. Today we are still searching for a replacement. A place to call home. A place we can gather to share our beliefs and our sorrows.

It's been a year, but it seems like a lifetime. I sometimes forget how easy it was to just pop into the Rectory to say hello to friends and my church family. I can say I took it for granted.

I truly believed we had a chance back in May 2004. Today, I realize we had none. It is with our hearts filled with such sorrow, we all go our separate ways, some finding new places of worship, but very few finding their new parish home. I will never forget.

- Elizabeth Waitt was a parishioner of the Sacred Heart Church. She is a Medford resident.

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