# GUIDE TO LEASING

## FOR CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

*A friendly guide from one Christian professional to another*

VERUS PRAEDIUM

A MINISTRY TO CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

## INTRODUCTION

If you've been involved in Classical Christian education for any length of time, you already know that finding and keeping the right facility is one of the biggest challenges schools face. Classrooms can move from church basements to business parks to freestanding campuses—all in the course of a few short years. Each move brings new costs, new logistics, and new uncertainties.

This guide was written to help bring a little clarity to that process. Whether you're a head of school, a board member, or a parent helping your school grow, understanding the basics of leasing can make a world of difference. The goal here isn't to turn you into a real estate expert, but to give you enough insight to ask the right questions, avoid common pitfalls, and make decisions that serve your mission well.

Leasing can be a wonderful blessing in the early stages of a school's life. It allows flexibility, preserves capital, and can provide a foothold in a community before permanent facilities are possible. But leases can also become burdensome if not structured wisely. A poorly negotiated lease can restrict your school's growth, stretch your budget, or even put your long-term viability at risk.

The good news is, with some forethought and the right counsel, a lease can support—not hinder—your calling to provide a Christ-centered education.

In the pages that follow, we'll walk through what every Classical Christian school should understand about leasing: from the basic terms and types of properties to practical advice on negotiation, stewardship, and long-term planning.

This isn't theory—it's practical, tested wisdom gathered from helping schools navigate these issues. My hope is that it will equip you to make sound, faithful decisions about your facilities—so your school can focus on forming hearts and minds for Christ.

## UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

Before diving into lease details, it’s helpful to see the big picture. Most Classical Christian schools lease space in one of three general settings:

**1. Churches:** Many schools begin this way, sharing space with a local congregation. It’s a natural partnership—shared mission, shared stewardship. But it can also bring challenges: limited access hours, shared use conflicts, and zoning issues.

**2. Commercial Buildings:** Office or retail spaces offer flexibility and availability. They’re often move-in ready and located in visible, accessible areas. But they also come with higher costs, secular landlords, and lease terms written for profit-driven tenants.

**3. Purpose-Built School Facilities:** The ideal, of course, is a permanent campus designed for your needs. These are often owned or master-leased by the school. But reaching this stage usually takes years of preparation and fundraising.

Wherever your school finds itself, the key is to view facilities as part of a long-term stewardship journey. Your space today should serve your mission—and help you take the next faithful step toward where God is leading tomorrow.

## KEY TERMS EVERY SCHOOL SHOULD KNOW

Leases can feel intimidating because of the terminology. Here are a few key terms you'll encounter:

**Base Rent:** The fixed monthly rent payment. This is often quoted on a per-square-foot, per-year or per-month basis.

**Triple Net (NNN):** In addition to rent, tenants pay property taxes, insurance, and maintenance. This is common in commercial spaces.

**Gross or Full-Service Lease:** The landlord covers most expenses, and you pay one fixed amount.

**Common Area Maintenance (CAM):** Fees for upkeep of shared areas like parking lots or hallways.

**Term:** The length of your lease. Schools often benefit from stability—longer terms with renewal options.

**Option to Purchase:** Sometimes, you can negotiate the right to buy the property later. This can be a wise way to secure long-term control of your space.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A LEASE

Not all leases are created equal. As you review options, keep an eye on these areas:

**1. Use Clause:** Make sure your lease clearly allows for educational use. Some commercial leases restrict school or church activities.

**2. Access and Hours:** Schools need early morning through late afternoon access, often year-round. Confirm this in writing.

**3. Tenant Improvements:** Can you modify the space—build classrooms, add restrooms, install security systems? Who pays for those changes?

**4. Renewal and Termination:** Avoid short-term leases that leave your school vulnerable to losing space. Look for renewal options or a pathway to ownership.

**5. Maintenance and Repairs:** Understand who is responsible for what—HVAC, roof, landscaping, etc. Ambiguity here can lead to big, unexpected costs.

## STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCIAL WISDOM

A lease isn't just a financial transaction—it's an act of stewardship. The goal isn't simply to find the cheapest option, but the one that best supports your mission and your people.

***A few principles to keep in mind:***

- **Count the cost:** Make sure your rent and facility costs align with a responsible percentage of your overall budget.
- **Plan for growth:** Think several years ahead—will your space still work if enrollment grows?
- **Engage wise counsel:** Involve board members with real estate or legal experience, and don't hesitate to seek outside advice when needed.
- **Pray for discernment:** God cares deeply about the details. Ask for wisdom as you steward His resources.

## NEGOTIATING FROM A POSITION OF CLARITY

You don't have to be a real estate expert to negotiate wisely. You just need clarity about your school's priorities.

Before you start any conversation, be clear about:

- **Your mission:** How does the space support it?
- **Your must-haves:** Space, safety, parking, access, and flexibility.
- **Your budget:** What can you sustain over time?

Landlords respect clarity. When you approach a lease calmly and confidently—with a clear understanding of your needs—you'll find most are willing to work toward a mutually beneficial solution.

## THINKING LONG-TERM

Even if your school is leasing today, it's wise to think about where you want to be five or ten years from now. A lease can be a stepping stone toward stability and ownership.

- **Build relationships:** Keep good communication with your landlord—it can open doors later.

- **Track your growth:** Document your facility needs and enrollment trends.

- **Pray and plan for permanence:** A school building is more than a facility—it's a long-term investment in your community's spiritual and intellectual life.

## ABOUT VERUS PRAEDIUM ADVISORS

Verus Praedium Advisors, LLC exists to serve schools, churches, and faith-based organizations by bringing clarity and conviction to their real estate decisions. We understand that for Classical Christian schools, property isn't just a financial asset—it's a tool for formation. The right facility supports a school's mission to cultivate truth, beauty, and goodness in the lives of students. The wrong one can strain resources, hinder growth, and distract from what matters most.

Our role is to come alongside school leaders as trusted guides. We help you:

- Assess and plan your real estate strategy with wisdom and foresight.
- Navigate leasing, purchasing, and development decisions with confidence.
- Communicate clearly with boards, parents, and donors about facility needs and opportunities.

Our approach is rooted in stewardship. We believe real estate decisions should reflect the same integrity, order, and prudence that Classical Christian schools seek to instill in their students. Whether your school is just getting started or preparing for long-term stability, we provide the experience, relationships, and insight to help you move forward wisely.

If you'd like to learn more or explore how we can assist your school, we'd love to connect.

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