

LEASING CHURCH PROPERTY FOR CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

A friendly guide from one Christian professional to another



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1. INTRODUCTION: PREPARING TO LEASE A CHURCH FOR SCHOOL USE

Leasing a church property for a Classical Christian school is an exciting opportunity, but it requires careful planning. Schools must consider zoning, building codes, safety, and the practicalities of daily operations to ensure a smooth and lawful transition.

Key Steps:

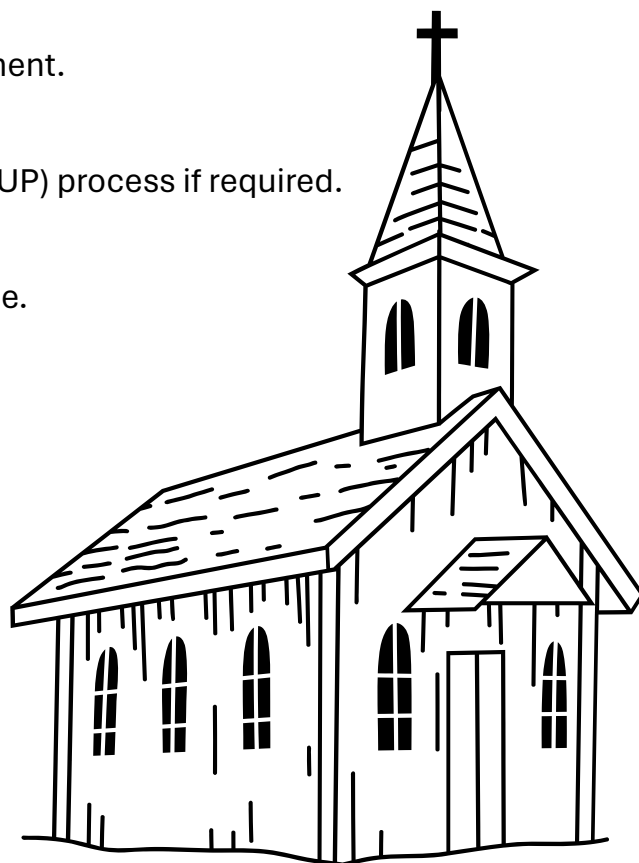
- Conduct a property assessment: space, layout, and condition.
- Consult legal and zoning experts.
- Evaluate safety and code compliance.
- Understand lease terms and responsibilities.

2. UNDERSTANDING ZONING AND LEGAL USE BEFORE YOU SIGN

Zoning determines whether the church property can legally operate as a school. Churches are often zoned as assembly or institutional, while schools may require an educational designation.

Steps to Take:

- Contact the local planning/zoning department.
- Review permitted and conditional uses.
- Understand the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process if required.
- Align lease terms with permit timelines.
- Engage land-use professionals for guidance.



3. NAVIGATING CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS FOR SCHOOLS

A CUP allows a local government to approve school use in zones where it is not automatically permitted.

CUP Process:

1. Pre-application meeting.
2. Formal application with site plans and supporting documents.
3. Public notification and comment.
4. Public hearing before planning commission or council.
5. Approval with potential conditions.

Tips for Success:

- Tell your school's story clearly.
- Show responsibility with safety and traffic plans.
- Engage neighbors early.
- Align lease terms with CUP approval timelines.

4. BUILDING CODES AND SAFETY STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL USE

Schools must comply with specific building codes for occupancy, fire safety, accessibility, and environmental health.

Key Areas:

- **Egress and fire safety:** exits, alarms, sprinklers.
- **Accessibility (ADA):** entrances, restrooms, pathways.
- **Restrooms and fixtures:** sufficient for students and staff.
- **Structural and environmental safety:** foundation, roof, mold, asbestos.
- **HVAC and air quality:** systems suitable for daily use.

Professional inspections ensure compliance and identify necessary upgrades before occupancy.

5. DESIGNING FUNCTIONAL SPACES – CLASSROOMS, OFFICES, AND MORE

Church layouts must be adapted to meet the functional needs of a school.

Considerations:

- **Classroom setup:** lighting, acoustics, furniture, storage.
- **Administrative areas:** offices, reception, teacher workrooms.
- **Large spaces:** sanctuaries and fellowship halls for assemblies and PE.
- **Outdoor areas:** play, recess, and circulation.
- **Atmosphere:** orderly, welcoming, and mission-aligned.
- **Phased improvements:** start with essential updates, refine aesthetics over time.

6. OUTDOOR SPACE, TRAFFIC FLOW, AND PLAY AREAS

Planning for exterior areas is critical for safety and efficiency.

Focus Areas:

- **Drop-off/pick-up:** safe circulation, one-way traffic, staff supervision.
- **Parking:** sufficient spaces, ADA-compliant, shared-use clarity.
- **Playgrounds:** safe surfaces, fencing, shade, supervision.
- **Outdoor learning:** courtyards, gardens, open-air classrooms.
- **Security:** controlled access, clear sight lines.
- **Coordination** with church events for shared outdoor space.



7. BEHIND THE WALLS – HVAC, ELECTRICAL, AND INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE

Reliable building systems underpin daily operations.

Critical Systems:

- **HVAC:** capacity for full-day use, zone control, air quality.
- **Electrical:** sufficient outlets, panel capacity, safety, lighting.
- **Internet/Technology:** bandwidth, coverage, wired/wireless needs.
- **Maintenance responsibilities:** clarify who handles regular upkeep and emergencies.
- **Energy efficiency:** LED lighting, programmable thermostats, sustainable practices.

8. LEASE NEGOTIATIONS AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

A clear, fair lease sets expectations for both school and church.

Key Elements:

- **Nature of relationship:** formal lease vs. partnership.
- **Term and renewal options:** balance flexibility and stability.
- **Rent and operating costs:** flat rent, NNN, or shared services.
- **Maintenance:** tenant vs. landlord responsibilities for systems and capital improvements.
- **Shared space scheduling:** calendars and priority rules.
- **Insurance:** property, liability, and additional insured coverage.
- **Modifications:** approvals, ownership of improvements, restoration obligations.
- **Termination:** notice, conditions, and property disposition.
- **Legal review:** attorney oversight ensures clarity and protection.

9. FINAL PREPARATIONS – LAUNCHING SCHOOL OPERATIONS IN A LEASED CHURCH PROPERTY

The final stage ensures a smooth, confident opening.

Preparatory Steps:

- **Complete inspections** and approvals.
- **Organize move-in** logistics and classroom setup.
- **Staff orientation:** building layout, safety, schedules.
- **Communicate** procedures to families.
- **Test technology** and administrative systems.
- **Conduct safety drills:** fire, lockdown, and drop-off/pick-up.
- **Establish atmosphere:** clean, ordered, welcoming.
- **Adopt a launch mindset:** celebrate, focus on students, maintain professionalism.

10. SUSTAINING THE SCHOOL-CHURCH PARTNERSHIP

Long-term success depends on cultivating a healthy, cooperative relationship.

Strategies:

- **Regular communication:** meetings, calendars, designated contacts.
- **Maintenance and shared responsibilities:** annual review and coordination.
- **Scheduling:** prevent conflicts with clear priority rules.
- **Financial transparency:** clear agreements, review periodically, co-invest in upgrades.
- **Community engagement:** joint events, celebrations, and service opportunities.
- **Conflict resolution:** address issues promptly, refer to lease agreements.
- **Long-term planning:** consider expansions, renewals, or eventual purchase collaboratively.

A strong partnership ensures stability, growth, and the faithful stewardship of shared resources.

Leasing a church property for a Classical Christian school is a complex but rewarding endeavor. With careful planning, attention to detail, and a spirit of cooperation, school founders can create safe, functional, and inspiring learning environments while building lasting relationships with the church community.

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.

Verus Praedium Advisors, LLC

Stewarding Property for the Cause of Truth

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Disclaimer

This guide is provided for general informational purposes only. It reflects insights and experience drawn from work with Classical Christian schools and other reliable sources. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, it should not be considered legal, financial, or real estate advice.

Each school's situation is unique, and laws, lease terms, and local requirements may vary. Readers are encouraged to seek guidance from qualified legal, financial, and real estate professionals before making any decisions based on this material.

