

Pastoral Planning Committee FAQs from 1/30 & 2/1 Feedback Sessions and Subsequent Emails

Below is our second edition of FAQs. We sincerely thank our parishioners for taking the time to share their questions and concerns for the benefit of all the parishioners of Christ the King Parish.

-The Pastoral Planning Committee

Do We Have to Close a Campus?

- **Has the Committee looked at increasing revenue or just going to one campus?**
 - The Committee has carefully and extensively explored both increasing revenue and reducing expenses, with the goal of ensuring long-term financial sustainability while supporting the mission and vision of the parish.
 - We have identified and are actively pursuing several opportunities to strengthen offertory giving and fundraising. We are grateful for the generosity of our parish community and believe these efforts will have a positive impact.
 - Even with these improvements, the projected increases in revenue - along with potential cost reductions - are not sufficient to achieve the level of financial stability needed for the parish's long-term health.
 - Most importantly, we must ensure that the parish is positioned not only to sustain itself, but also to invest in its mission and vision for the future. After careful consideration of all options, this broader responsibility has been a key factor in our recommendations.

- **We have a lot of Catholics to serve in Reading. Could we temporarily close one campus, with the option of reopening it if we need the space?**
 - The Committee considered whether a temporary closure of one campus could be a viable option. While this approach could provide some short-term savings in operating expenses, it does not address the underlying financial challenges facing the parish.
 - Our current financial situation is driven largely by the cost of maintaining six aging facilities across two campuses, combined with a significant decline in Mass attendance over the past decade. With fewer parishioners attending regularly, we no longer require the same level of facility capacity that we once did.

- A temporary closure would still leave the parish responsible for maintaining unused buildings, and it would not provide the long-term financial stability needed to sustain the parish or invest in its future.
 - For these reasons, the Committee focused on solutions that more directly address both our current realities and the long-term vitality of the parish.
- **The decision to close a campus seemed unexpected and abrupt; the timeline also seems arbitrary and inadequate for such a major decision. Can you clarify?**
- There have been several communications and activities since October 2024 aimed at addressing the parish finances:
 - October 2024 - Offertory Challenge and Updates at all Masses about our finances
 - Spring 2025 - Business Manager gives in person presentation on parish finances at all Masses
 - Two end of year financial reports
 - Weekly updates about offertory in the bulletin - as requested by parishioners
 - September 2025 Listening Sessions - finances were presented - "everything on the table"
 - Fall 2025 - response to parishioners feedback at listening sessions in written form
 - January/February 2026 - two feedback sessions
 - March 2026 - a response to parishioners questions is forthcoming
 - We understand that this process may feel sudden, and we recognize that decisions of this magnitude can be difficult and emotional for many in our parish community.
 - Since the Committee was formed in May 2025, we have been engaged in an extensive and thoughtful process that has included evaluating the long-term vision of the parish alongside its financial sustainability. This work has involved careful analysis, discussion, and discernment over many months.
 - Throughout this process, the Committee has sought to balance the urgency of addressing our current challenges with the responsibility to conduct thorough due diligence and provide clear communication. The

timeline reflects the need to respond to real and ongoing financial and operational pressures facing the parish.

- We remain committed to continuing, open communication and to supporting parishioners as we move forward together.

➤ **Before deciding to close a campus, why weren't we given the opportunity to work together to address the issues? Why weren't we given suggestions on how to raise funds and reduce expenses?**

- We deeply value the desire of parishioners to be involved in strengthening our parish, and we share that commitment to working together.
- Throughout this process, the Committee has made efforts to engage the parish community. During the initial listening sessions, we invited ideas and feedback from parishioners. In the second round of sessions, we shared more detailed information about the parish's financial situation, along with the steps being explored to increase revenue and reduce expenses.
- We have carefully considered these ideas and have worked closely with parish staff and representatives from the Archdiocese of Boston, to evaluate a range of opportunities, including offertory growth, fundraising initiatives, and cost-saving measures. While these efforts are important and continue to be pursued, the financial gap we face now and in the future is significant, and cannot be fully addressed through these measures alone. We also must consider the increased costs to properly support our mission and future growth.
- We remain grateful for the input we have received and continue to welcome ideas at any time. The involvement of our parish community is and will be essential as we move forward and work together to support the future of the parish.

➤ **Is there anything we can do now to delay/prevent closing? Does the Archdiocese pay for repair costs for churches? Were grants considered? A capital campaign?**

- We understand the desire to explore every possible option to avoid closing a campus, and we share that commitment to doing all we can for the good of the parish.
- After extensive analysis and discernment, the Committee has concluded that consolidating to one campus is the only path that provides long-term financial sustainability while also allowing the parish to invest in its mission

and future. For this reason, there are no additional measures at this time that would meaningfully delay or prevent this outcome.

- The Committee's work is continuing as we carefully evaluate next steps, including determining which campus will best serve the needs of the parish moving forward.
- Regarding financial support, parishes are responsible for their own operating and capital expenses. The Archdiocese does not provide funding for routine repairs or ongoing facility needs.
- We also explored a range of alternatives, including grants and the potential for a capital campaign. While these could provide some level of support, they would not be sufficient to address the scale of the financial challenges we face.
- We remain grateful for the care and concern of our parishioners, and we will continue to move forward together in faith as we work to sustain and strengthen our parish community.

➤ **There are several plans and drawings that exist for improvements/expansion/accessibility of the buildings on the St. Athanasius campus. Could these plans be implemented to make St. Athanasius the campus of choice to stay open?**

- The opportunity for improvement/expansion of both campuses will be considered in the determining of next steps. We will be looking at the financial considerations and alignment with the parish vision.
- We appreciate the thoughtful planning and care that have gone into developing these proposals for St. Athanasius, and we recognize the importance of those efforts to many parishioners.
- As the Committee continues its work to determine next steps, all such plans - at both campuses - will be carefully considered. This includes evaluating potential improvements, expansion opportunities, and accessibility needs.
- In making any recommendation, the Committee will weigh several factors, including financial feasibility, long-term sustainability, and how well each option supports the overall vision and mission of the parish.
- While no final determination has been made, these existing plans will be a part of the discussion as we discern which campus can best serve the parish moving forward.

- **Will you present alternative ideas besides closing one campus when you meet with the Archdiocese (e.g., establishing a school)?**
- We appreciate the creativity and commitment behind suggestions like these, and the Committee has taken time to explore a range of alternative ideas as part of its work.
 - At this stage, the Committee's plan is to present a single, well-discerned recommendation to the pastor, who will then determine whether to advance it to the Archbishop, after providing additional opportunity for parishioner feedback. This approach reflects the responsibility to offer a clear and viable path forward based on the full scope of our analysis.
 - In evaluating alternatives - such as repurposing a campus for a school or other uses - we considered both the financial requirements and alignment with the parish's mission. Given the parish's current financial position, we do not have the available resources to support the level of investment such a transition would require.
 - We also explored options such as leasing part or all of a campus. However, these approaches are generally not encouraged by the Archdiocese, as they may not align with the primary mission of the Church to evangelize and serve the parish community.
 - For these reasons, the Committee has focused on a recommendation that we believe is most supportive of the parish's long-term mission and financial sustainability.
- **Any consideration given to having a 3rd location (new campus) to bring everyone together?**
- We appreciate the creativity and forward-thinking behind this suggestion, and the Committee did consider a wide range of possibilities as part of its discernment.
 - Establishing a new campus would require significant financial resources, including the purchase of suitable land and the construction of new facilities. Given the parish's current financial position and limited savings, this type of investment is not feasible - even when considering potential proceeds from the sale of existing properties.
 - In addition, there are practical challenges related to identifying available land that would meet the needs of the parish and align with its long-term vision.

- While we recognize that the possibility of closing a campus is difficult, it also presents an opportunity to come together more fully as one parish community - united in one location and focused on a shared mission to bring Christ to the Reading community and beyond.

Finances

➤ **Can the parish look at Capital Improvement needs with a longer-term view, say 10 years, as a basis for future parish planning?**

- Yes. The parish does have a ten-year plan for capital improvements and maintenance. We recognize that taking a longer-term view of our facility and capital improvement needs is an important part of the Committee's work. We are actively evaluating both the ongoing maintenance required to sustain our buildings and how those needs align with the broader vision for the parish.
- This includes a careful assessment of capital expenses over the coming years so that any decisions made today support the long-term health and mission of the parish. These considerations will play a key role as we determine next steps.
- At the same time, we must be mindful of our current financial reality. Parish savings have decreased by approximately \$500,000 over the past three years, while we continue to maintain six aging facilities that require significant ongoing (and often immediate) investment.
- While savings can help address certain needs in the short term, they are not sufficient to support the level of capital improvements required across both campuses over time. For this reason, long-term sustainability remains a central factor in our planning and recommendations.

➤ **What is the status of the capital funds for each campus, including the funds received from the sale of the Bainbridge property?**

- Funds from the sale of the Bainbridge property for St. Athanasius are unrestricted and can be used for any parish need. Funds raised through the *Inspiring Hope* capital campaign for St. Agnes remain designated for that campus and would require donor permission to reallocate the funds elsewhere. These funds are considered restricted.
- If a campus were to close before those restricted funds are fully used, the remaining balance would be available to support the needs of the parish,

including the remaining campus, in accordance with Archdiocesan guidelines.

- The Committee is committed to ensuring that all funds are managed responsibly and used in a way that honors the intent of those who contributed and supports the long-term needs of the parish.

Decision Process for Campus Closure

➤ What is the process for deciding which campus to close/sell?

1. Start with the Vision for Christ the King Parish.
2. Identify the important criteria required to meet this vision.
3. Evaluate each campus against the criteria selected.
4. Make a recommendation to Father Bobby on which campus best meets the criteria.
5. Father Bobby reviews and discusses the recommendation with the PPC, then makes the decision on which campus to recommend for closure.
6. Present findings and recommendation to the Parish (Feedback Sessions, FAQs, Presentations, Website, Handouts).
7. Solicit feedback at meetings and through a dedicated email address (PPC@ChristTheKingReading.org)
8. After completing the feedback sessions and considering all feedback received at the meetings and in the emails, Father Bobby confirms his decision and announces it to the Parish.
9. Father Bobby presents his recommendation to the Archbishop.

➤ Does the Archdiocese make the decision? Does there have to be unanimity among the PPC and Father Bobby?

- Yes. The Archbishop will consider Father Bobby's recommendation, and then decide the best path forward for the parish.

➤ Will the Archbishop look at which campus has money or will bring in more money if sold?

- Since we are one parish, the campuses do not have separate budgets or cash (other than the “restricted funds” mentioned above). While the

Archbishop may consider valuation of each worship site, it would not be a determining factor.

➤ **Will you provide a list of pros and cons for each campus?**

- At the upcoming Feedback Sessions scheduled for early May (exact dates to be determined), we will provide the specific criteria for evaluating each of the campuses.

➤ **Will there be sufficient parishioner involvement in the process?**

- So far, we have conducted 2 Listening Sessions last September; 2 Feedback Sessions on January 30th & February 1st; and 2 additional Feedback Sessions scheduled for early May. After these May Sessions and the resulting email feedback, the PPC and Father Bobby will evaluate whether additional sessions are necessary/appropriate.

The PPC dedicated email address remains active for ongoing parishioner feedback: PPC@ChristTheKingReading.org.

➤ **What are the major criteria you will use in deciding which campus closes?**

- In February's Pastoral Planning FAQs (see parish PPC website & February 15th bulletin insert), we published the following guiding principles for the decision:
 - Financial and structural sustainability
 - Condition, accessibility, and ongoing costs of facilities
 - Ability to support sacramental life and faith formation
 - Ability to best support the New Vision for Christ the King Parish
 - Space for children, youth, families, and community gathering
 - Stewardship of parish resources for future generations
 - Support for the pastor's needs to effectively carry out his mission and vision
- In addition, at the May Feedback Sessions we will present specific, detailed criteria for each campus.

- **Will the remaining campus be able to accommodate new programs and increased attendance, annual outdoor Mass, with room for expansion?**
 - These questions will be discussed during our May Feedback Sessions.

- **Shouldn't the decision-making process include: an additional feedback session, to provide the relevant factors/guiding principles for deciding which campus to close, and to solicit feedback and emails?**
 - After further review of the Pastoral Planning Committee's time-line, and input from parishioners, we are adding Feedback Sessions in May to our schedule (exact dates to be determined). This will provide parishioners with an opportunity for additional questions and comments and any updates from the Committee. Father Bobby also postponed his March 25th meeting with the Archbishop to June 17th, to allow additional time for parishioner feedback and PPC responses.

Seating

- **What is the seating capacity of each Church?**
 - Based on the feedback we received at the sessions, we are reconfirming the number of current seats at St. Agnes Church and St. Athanasius Church. This information will be communicated during the May Feedback Sessions.

Parking & Accessibility

- **Parking How many parking spaces are there at each campus?**
 - St. Agnes: 89 parking spots, St. Athanasius: 136 parking spots

- **Are there other places to park at St. Agnes campus besides the parking lot?**
 - There are 21 spots that Christ the King parishioners are allowed to utilize at the Schoolhouse Commons apartment building next door. Please note, these spaces are included in the 89 parking spots listed above. There is also on-street parking on Woburn St. and neighboring side streets (i.e. Temple & Wenda St.). The committee is looking into other supplemental parking solutions.

➤ **Does each campus have: sufficient (off-street) parking, including handicap spots; handicap accessibility/walkway for the church; and a bathroom on the same level as the church (important given the large number of seniors)?**

- These are very important considerations, particularly in ensuring that our parish remains welcoming and accessible to all, including our senior community.

At this time, each campus has certain strengths as well as areas that would need improvement. As part of the decision-making process, the Committee is carefully evaluating these factors to ensure that the selected campus can safely and comfortably serve the needs of the parish.

- The Committee will be providing detailed information about handicap accessibility for both campuses at our May Feedback Sessions.
- Whichever campus is ultimately selected, a detailed plan will be developed to address these types of concerns so that the facility supports accessibility, safety, and the overall needs of the parish community.
- The Committee remains committed to ensuring that the final recommendation reflects both the practical needs of parishioners and the long-term vision of the parish.

Campus Sale Questions

➤ **If we close a campus and sell it, does the money go to the Archdiocese? Who gets the money? Who owns the land?**

- All Archdiocesan properties are owned by the Archbishop. If a campus is sold, the net proceeds after expenses from the sale would remain with the parish.
- In accordance with Archdiocesan guidelines, 18 percent of the sale proceeds is typically allocated to the Archdiocese. After this, the remaining funds are retained by the parish.
- A portion of these funds is available for general parish use. A portion will be restricted for a defined period of time (typically five years), in line with Archdiocesan policies. These funds are intended to support the long-term needs and mission of the parish.

What Are Other Parishes Experiencing?

- **Are there other campus consolidations happening throughout the Diocese? Do they have any ideas, practices, goals that would be helpful for us?**
 - There was a pause with consolidations with the arrival of the new Archbishop. These types of planning conversations with parishes and the Archdiocese have recently resumed, with Reading being one of them.
 - For those parishes that are starting conversations, communication, transparency, and discernment have been the overriding theme for the process. Christ The King is following that pathway.

- **How did the Portsmouth Parish you visited address their situation, and what did they do to bring people back to the church?**
 - Corpus Christi Parish, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, had 3 campuses (9 buildings total), with 700 parishioners attending Mass. They sold one campus and renovated the two others. Twelve years later they have 2400 parishioners attending Mass and are a thriving parish. Why? Because they were able to move from maintenance to mission, utilizing resources to focus on parish life, family faith formation, evangelization, adoration, reconciliation, the sacraments, daily Mass...in a Word, Jesus!

How Do We Get Catholics Back to Church?

- **How do we get Catholics back to Church? What is working around the Archdiocese, state, and nation? What is bringing people back to Jesus?**
 - Great question. Here at Christ the King Parish, we already see signs of progress and optimism for the future. Father Bobby's "Vision for the Present and the Future" for Christ the King Parish is a template for what needs to be done to bring back our Parishioners, enrich and grow the spiritual lives of our current parishioners, and prepare all of us for future evangelization. Please see the Parish website, under PPC, for Father Bobby's 2-page [Vision for our Parish](#).

After Closure Questions

- **Once a decision is made on which campus to close, could we consider bringing over items from that campus/church to the remaining campus?**
 - Absolutely. This would be a beautiful sign of our community and solidarity and a way to keep alive the wonderful memories of the past, while

providing comfort, hope and inspiration for the future of Christ the King Parish. It would be nice to have a beautiful space that memorializes our history, so we can remember where we came from and draw strength for the future.

Rumors

- **I heard that you can no longer book weddings at St. Athanasius Church. Is this true?**
 - False. We continue to book weddings for both campuses. So, bring them on!

- **Someone told me that a Purchase & Sale Agreement has been signed for the sale of St. Athanasius campus. Is this true?**
 - False. No offers, commitments, purchase and sale agreements or any other type agreement has been made.

Other Questions

- **Will the Feedback Session slides be available on the website?**
 - Yes, at ChristTheKingReading.org/PPC.

- **What is the weekly Mass attendance for our Parish?**
 - The average weekly Mass attendance for our Fiscal Year 2026 year to date (July 1, 2025 - February 28th, 2026) is 732 persons.

- **Will the Christmas Faire continue, regardless of which campus closes?**
 - The parish is committed to continuing the Christmas Faire.

- **Will you continue to provide responses to the Feedback Sessions and emails you receive from parishioners?**
 - Yes. We will announce a deadline for submitting feedback on the PPC email address. After the deadline we will provide updated FAQ's addressing any remaining questions.