

We have done our best to reconstruct the questions as they were presented to us on Saturday. If we have missed one or there is need for follow-up, please let us know.

Have we contacted every church in the Blackstone Deanery? (If not, why not?)

The deanery meets every month, and churches share in conversation around these kinds of issues. We have spoken about mergers and other collaborations in many deanery meetings. The rector spoke to the clergy at all but two of the churches in our deanery about the current situation. The vestry specifically approached two different congregations who seemed most interested: St. John's in Ashton and Emmanuel in Cumberland. Our current proposal is a result of these conversations.

Why wasn't the parish informed of Mr. Vareika's offer to raise funds for the repair of the La Farge windows? Why do we continue to show a \$200,000 repair cost in our materials?

The clergy and vestry of Christ Church have received no such offer from Mr. Vareika. The repair cost, well in excess of \$200,000, is what the expert who examined the windows put her in her report to the clergy and vestry of Christ Church (please see November 14 financial presentation for further details).

Has anyone done the research so that we know the costs to demolish the church?

Yes. The merger team's property sub-committee did this research and has the figures. The complete report of the property sub-committee will be made available at our January 23 meeting.

How many square feet is the Parish House?

We don't have an exact figure readily available. If there is a need for the exact figure, let us know.

Did anyone ask Emmanuel Church to come here to merge with us?

Yes. Let us reiterate that three scenarios were presented to the merger committee and researched by the property subcommittee. The options explored were: merging and coming to the current Christ Church location, merging and coming to the current Emmanuel location, or merging and establishing a new location. The property sub-committee spent hours of time and a great deal of energy researching every facet of these options. The option of going to the Emmanuel Church location was the most financially feasible, and had the best possibility of success, so that was the option presented for a vote.

Why couldn't Emmanuel come to Christ Church in the interim while a new space is built?

The ability to build our new worship space at the Emmanuel location includes the proceeds from the sale of the existing Christ Church property. Moreover, the buildings of Christ Church are expensive to operate, and could adversely affect the financial health of the merged congregation.

Why hasn't the parish been told about Alan Shawn Feinstein's grant of \$50,000 to start a homeless shelter?

Opening a homeless shelter would be a noble and worthy outreach effort and is the sort of thing that we would like to be able to consider as a parish. However at this point in the life of our parish, it is not a financially viable option. As far as we can tell, the money offered by Feinstein would be specifically designated to provide beds and cover other overhead costs of the operation of a homeless shelter, rather than operating costs of the parish. The rector has spoken to other churches in the area that operate homeless shelters or which have considered operating them, including St. Paul's in Pawtucket, and determined that a homeless shelter, even with generous donations and grants from outside sources, is at best a break-even operation. St. Paul's had completed about \$100,000 in fire safety remediation just prior to opening its shelter, and we expect that a significant investment would be required to make our Parish House suitable for this purpose. Given our inability to meet our current financial needs, it is beyond our ability to take this project on at this time.

Did we ask other groups about renting our church for worship space?

No. We are not aware, at this time, of other religious groups that need our church for worship space. Some of the limitations of our current church space (lack of handicapped bathroom, almost no off-street parking, etc.) paired with the current condition of our buildings (deteriorating boiler) might make it difficult to rent.

Did everyone on the vestry read Joanne Jourdan's blog post?

The entire vestry received an email from Joanne with the same content as her blog post. When asked, by a show of hands at the vestry meeting it appeared that every member present had read the email.

Why haven't we worked harder on "retention" in our parish?

Congregations across the country and across denominations struggle with the issue of retention. Nationwide, a mainline Protestant church such as ours can, statistically speaking, expect a 10% loss in members each year, due to death, dissatisfaction, or relocation. At Christ Church, all of our worship, fellowship, education, and service opportunities are designed for people to continue to develop and deepen their relationship with God. The best way to retain members is to involve them more deeply in the life of the church. Clergy and ministry leaders are regularly in conversation with existing members about how to respond to their needs.

Why won't any of our leaders answer questions? Why has this process been cloaked in secrecy?

Vestry members and clergy have done their best to respond to questions and convey as much information as possible. We have had a series of parish conversations, parish meetings, and mailings to keep the parish informed along the way. Vestry members, who are volunteers, have spent countless hours gathering information, responding to questions, and engaging in conversations with anyone who expressed interest. Vestry meetings are open to the public, telephone numbers of vestry

members are readily available, and vestry members are present each week at worship. Information is routinely posted online and is available on bulletin boards in the Parish House, or people may contact the Parish Office with requests for information.

Why do we send newcomers pledge letters? Doesn't it give a bad impression if we talk about money when we have new members in church?

No new members have expressed concern about this, and indeed many have been grateful for guidance on what to give. Over the last few years, our first-time pledges have been near or even above our parish-wide average, which suggests a willingness to take part in giving. Stewardship research has clearly shown that people need to be invited to generous participation in the life of the church and that avoiding talk about money leads to unhealthy patterns of giving.

Have we talked to historic preservation groups about grants, such as the 1772 Foundation?

Yes. We approached a number of historic preservation groups about their interest in supporting Christ Church. The 1772 Foundation gives matching grants. In response to our last grant and request for funds, the parish as a whole barely responded to our fundraising efforts. Foundations will invest in our church only if there is demonstrable evidence of a literal investment on the part of parishioners.

How will we continue our ministries, such as Harvest Cafe, in a smaller space?

Once we decide on whether or not to merge, clergy and ministry leaders from both parishes will meet to determine the best way to house our ministries in our new space.

Has anyone considered the cost to move our rood cross to a new location? Where would it be stored while new space is being built?

Once we have made the decision about whether or not we are merging, a committee with representatives from both parishes will meet to determine which items from the two churches we will use for the new, merged parish. This would include the rood cross.