



**Archdiocese of Boston Update Summary**  
**Proposal Regarding the Future of St. Brendan Church**

November 8, 2022

In the last several days there has been significant public conversation about the future of Saint Brendan Church and School. That conversation has led to some confusion over the state of the question, and the meaning of the proposal that is being considered.

In response to the parish community's request for additional review, in May of 2022, Cardinal Seán asked that a committee be established to find a plan to keep Saint Brendan Church open without putting Saint Brendan School or Saint Martin de Porres Parish at risk financially. At that time, the Cardinal wrote to the parish stating,

*“It is important to acknowledge that the parish faces compelling financial pressures that necessitate decisions about how the parish will assure its future. The decisions that must be reached impact all those who worship at St. Ann Church, St. Brendan Church, as well as the St. Brendan school families. St. Martin de Porres Parish is facing significant operating shortfalls and the need for significant capital improvements for the functionality and safety of the buildings. Meeting this challenge will require the resources of the community, the parish, and the school.”*

The committee includes members of Saint Martin de Porres Parish and people affiliated with Saint Brendan School as well as three representatives from the archdiocese. The committee has met 7 times with extensive additional contact between meetings.

This document is intended to address confusion specifically about the proposal, presented to the committee by its archdiocesan members, which would:

1. Establish Saint Brendan School as an entity separate from Saint Martin de Porres Parish.
2. Put in place a board of governance for the administration of the school.
3. And give the school Saint Brendan Church as a chapel for the school and as a meeting place for school events.

***The Plan***

We want to start by pointing out the current structure of the various entities.

Before July of 2020, Saint Brendan Parish was a distinct entity, and that Parish had a parish school, called Saint Brendan School. The Pastor of Saint Brendan Parish was the Administrator of Saint Brendan School. While the school and the parish tracked their budgets separately, ultimately the parish was responsible for the school, financially and in every other way.

Saint Ann Parish was also a distinct entity, and from 2009 to 2021 it had a campus of a board run school – the Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy – associated with it, although the pastor of Saint Ann Parish was not the Administrator of the academy.

In July of 2020, Saint Ann and Saint Brendan Parishes merged to form Saint Martin de Porres Parish. This new Parish had two churches (Saint Ann Church and Saint Brendan Church) and a parish school (Saint Brendan School).

The new model described above would change this structure:

1. Saint Brendan School would become a separate entity, governed by a Board of Limited Jurisdiction.
2. Saint Brendan Church would become a chapel of Saint Brendan School, but would still be available to the community for Sunday Masses and other sacraments.
3. Both the School and the Church would be separated from Saint Martin de Porres Parish.

### ***Working Group***

The group met seven or eight times in these recent months to develop a plan. Along the way it became clear that there were several values that needed to be protected and maintained by whatever plan is put in place. These values include:

- The strong connection between Saint Brendan School and Saint Brendan Church.
- The need for the school children to have a place at which they can gather all together for Mass.
- The need for the school to have a meeting space larger than the cafeteria.
- The need for the worshiping community to continue to have Masses and Sacraments at Saint Brendan Church.
- The need for the school to have the right venue for forming the school children in the Catholic faith.
- The opportunity for the school to grow in response to the many young families seeking to send their children there.
- The need for the school to remain viable financially, and not be crippled by present or future debts.
- The need for the local community to have a vibrant school and a well-maintained worship site right in the neighborhood, as well as a place for neighborhood events and civic gatherings.

### ***The Proposal***

In response to these values surfaced by the working group the archdiocese put forward a proposal, the basic elements of which are as follows.

- Saint Brendan School would be incorporated into a new entity which, as is common in these circumstances, would be governed by a Board of Limited Jurisdiction, with its first members appointed by the Archbishop of Boston, and subsequent members approved by him.
- A local priest from the Dorchester area would also be a voting member of the board.
- Saint Brendan Church would be separated from Saint Martin de Porres Parish, and would be leased by the Archdiocese of Boston to the newly incorporated Saint Brendan School for one dollar per year.
- Day to day operation of the Church would be managed by the School Board.
- If the School Board came to the conclusion that the School could no longer afford to operate Saint Brendan Church, the Church would revert back to the Archdiocese of Boston and be closed.

In the month of October, the committee was asked to consider this new model within context of their plan, and to gauge whether the new model meets the values listed above. Details of the proposal were conveyed to the committee, and they asked for time to consider those details. At the next meeting the committee expressed their desire to not move forward with the new model. Thus, further discussions of the new model ceased without a formal written presentation ever being made to the committee. In an attempt now to clarify things, a draft copy of the formal proposal is attached to this document. It should be emphasized that this is a proposal only; it is presented for discussion. Cardinal Seán has yet to decide to implement this, nor will he do so without further input from the community.

There are a couple of key points which we are anxious to clarify:

**Is this a plan intended to close Saint Brendan School?**

No, it is not. The plan attempts to achieve all of the goals put forward by the working group, including the continuation of Saint Brendan School.

**Is Saint Brendan School going to inherit a large debt if this plan is implemented?**

No. Saint Brendan School has a small debt already, which it has been servicing for some years, and will continue to pay off until the debt is retired. If the School Board determines that through collections at Mass and other fundraising events the maintenance and needed repair of Saint Brendan Church is beyond the reach of those funds, the Board will have the option to recommend that the Church close, thus protecting the School. No further debt should be incurred by the School as a result of this proposal.

**Why is this Board of Limited Jurisdiction being established?**

If the Pastor of Saint Martin de Porres Parish is no longer the Administrator of Saint Brendan School, the School needs some formal Administrator. Many Archdiocesan schools have through the years moved from being parish schools to being schools governed by a board.

### *Conclusion*

We hope that this brief document respectfully answers some of the concerns that have been raised. We look forward to other opportunities to answer the various questions of the community concerning this new model. We welcome the opportunity to continue an exchange of ideas and recommendations with the working group.