

GUIDELINES FOR HOUSING ALLOWANCE AND PARSONAGE

Every church must provide adequate housing for its pastor. The church or charge may meet this need by means of a parsonage or by providing a housing allowance sufficient to buy or rent a home in the area served by the church.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR CHURCH-PROVIDED PARSONAGES

While the Committee understands that many parsonages within the Annual Conference do not meet these new minimum requirements, it is expected that measures will be taken by the local church to bring the parsonage within these requirements by 2016.

1. **Bedrooms:** The parsonage shall have at least four bedrooms of at least 120 square feet each with ample lighted closets in each. The master bedroom shall have its own bath. It is recommended that the master bedroom be located on the main level. At least one bedroom and bath shall be on the main level.
2. **Bathrooms:** There shall be at least two full baths in the house. The main floor of the parsonage shall be handicap accessible.
3. **Kitchen:** The kitchen shall be large enough for family eating space or a breakfast nook as well as built-in cabinets, double sink, cooking range, self-cleaning oven, and frost-free refrigerator with a large freezer and ice maker.
4. **Climate control:** Central heat and air are required, along with storm windows and insulation to meet present day building codes. Storm windows and doors should be provided to conserve energy. Screens must be provided for all windows and doors.
5. **Study:** A study shall be provided either at the parsonage or at the church.
6. **Living/Dining Area:** There shall be a family room/dining room and/or a living room and separate dining room that may be used for entertaining. It is desirable to have a den or family room away from the main living room.
7. **Floor coverings:** The church shall provide proper floor coverings in the parsonage with either carpeting or hardwood flooring in living spaces and tiled or vinyl flooring in the kitchens and bathrooms.
8. **Window treatments:** The church shall provide blinds or shades for all windows. Curtains may be provided but are not required.
9. **Television:** Cable or satellite television connection should be provided. Service is to be paid for by the pastor.

10. **Telephone:** The telephone line must be private with jacks in at least the study, living area, and master bedroom.
11. **Wiring/Plumbing:** All wiring and plumbing must conform to present day codes and are to provide for present and future needs in order that all appliances and computer equipment may be used safely. All receptacles must be properly grounded.
12. **Security and Safety:** The church shall provide smoke alarms and a fire extinguisher. It is recommended that the church also provide a security system for the parsonage with the pastor paying for the monitoring services.
13. **Parsonage grounds:** Parsonage grounds should have foundation shrubbery, shade trees, and adequate yard space for children. It is recommended that the church provide lawn maintenance service for the parsonage, if not, a powered lawn mower must be provided for the parsonage. The mower should be a riding mower if the yard is larger than ½ acre. Maintenance of the mower is the responsibility of the church. A fenced play area is recommended.
14. **Garage/Carport and storage:** A two-car garage or carport shall be provided and a minimum of 120 square feet of outdoor storage space shall be provided.
15. **Insurance:** An amount of insurance equal to at least 80% of the replacement value of the parsonage and church-owned contents should be carried by the church (fire and extended coverage). The pastor should carry adequate insurance to cover the pastor's family's personal belongings and furnishings.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PARSONAGES

Guidelines for Privacy:

Although the parsonage is the property of the church, it must be understood that it is also the private home of the parsonage family. Courtesy dictates that the parsonage be visited only upon invitation by the parsonage family. Even the annual mandatory parsonage review and parsonage committee meetings must be scheduled with the parsonage family with at least two weeks notice.

Guidelines for Care of Property:

The parsonage family should take care of the house, furnishings, and property, making it a policy to leave them in good condition. Best results will be obtained as the parsonage family and parsonage committee work together, feeling free to

discuss the needs with each other. It is understood that there will be a natural depreciation of property and contents which calls for repairs and replacements periodically.

Guidelines for Parsonage Upkeep:

1. The church's annual budget should include a parsonage fund equivalent to at least 3% of the value of the property for the purpose of repairs, maintenance, pest control, and insurance. Unused yearly funds should be placed in an interest bearing account to be used for capital expenses of the parsonage to include the future purchase of a new parsonage where the current does not meet minimum parsonage standards.
2. The parsonage family should be consulted in the selection of color schemes, window treatments, and equipment.
3. The parsonage should be kept well painted inside and out.
4. Every parsonage should have a parsonage book. The parsonage book is to be maintained by the parsonage family and should include all guarantees, repair parts lists, instructions for use of equipment, and an inventory of all church-owned contents. The book should also include a maintenance log which will list when and from whom items were purchased, who to call for repairs, when and by whom improvements were made, and any other information helpful to future parsonage families. A pictorial record, preferably in video format, should be taken as soon as possible on or after each moving day. This record will be invaluable for insurance purposes in case of fire or other catastrophe. It also would serve as a record of the parsonage's initial condition. An extra copy of the pictorial record and the parsonage book should be stored in a secure place away from the parsonage.

Guidelines for pets:

Keeping animals outside the parsonage is recommended. It is understood, however, that family pets kept inside the home bring much comfort and joy. Therefore, if they are kept inside the parsonage, the following guidelines must be met:

1. The church trustees must be kept informed of any pet inside or outside the parsonage.
2. Only a domestic pet, which will be defined as a small dog, cat, caged bird, or aquarium fish can be kept in the parsonage. Guide animals are not to be considered pets. Any other animal requires the approval of the church

- trustees. Also, more than one indoor pet requires the approval of the trustees.
3. All damages incurred by any pet will be the responsibility of the pastor and will be reported to the church trustees and assessed. Payment for repairs should be immediate, but no later than moving day. Flea and tick treatment is required.
 4. If pets are kept inside, the parsonage family must make an extra effort to thoroughly clean the parsonage to eliminate any evidence of pets having been present, which includes fleas, ticks, pet hair, pet dander, stains, excrements, etc.

Guidelines for smoking:

It is recommended that there be no smoking inside a parsonage with the understanding that smoking cigarettes, cigars, pipes, etc., causes a residual odor to remain in carpets and walls in addition to being a health risk. All damage that is incurred will be the responsibility of the pastor.

Guidelines for Damages to Parsonage:

Any damages other than those which are due to normal usage, shall be assessed by the chairperson of the parsonage committee and must be paid by the pastor prior to moving from the parsonage.

Guidelines for Utilities:

Arrangements should be made by the pastor with appropriate companies to prorate all utility bills up through moving day. The moving pastor should not have the utilities turned off. It is recommended that the church have the utility accounts in the church's name with the pastor paying the amounts due for the utilities to the church a week prior to the due date. This will prevent any transfer issues arising from pastors moving.

Guidelines for Parsonage Updates:

All parsonages should be updated or renovated to conform as nearly as possible to the suggested minimum standards in these guidelines.

General suggestions for updating parsonages:

1. To enhance the relationship between the congregation and parsonage family, it is suggested that an "open house" be observed occasionally.
2. Periodic meetings with the parsonage committee should be held in the parsonage to discuss needed updates. Dates are to be agreed upon by the

- committee and the pastor. This is the suggested time to update the parsonage book. Copies of the parsonage book and the pictorial record should be kept by the pastor, parsonage committee chairperson, and on file in the church or a safety deposit box.
3. Discarded furnishings from church members should not be placed in the parsonage.
 4. The pastor's family is responsible for thoroughly cleaning the parsonage and grounds when he/she is moving. This is not the responsibility of the church.

Mandatory parsonage review guidelines:

1. A meeting concerning the parsonage will be conducted each year prior to charge conference.
2. This meeting will be held in the parsonage and will include a mandatory review of the entire parsonage—inside and out.
3. The attendance of the following individuals is expected: the pastor, the trustees chairperson, the parsonage committee chairperson, and the chairperson of the pastor/staff relations committee (see *The Book of Discipline*, ¶2532.4) If the pastor has a spouse, he/she should also be included.
4. The specific date can be set any time during the year, but it must be set at least two weeks prior to the church's annual charge conference with all parties agreeing to the date set.
5. Even though this mandatory meeting takes place to satisfy a disciplinary requirement, it is recommended that other parsonage committee meetings be held to consider parsonage improvements and other concerns.
6. A parsonage report will be completed and signed by all in attendance at the parsonage review detailing the findings and recommendations made during the meeting. This report will be submitted to the district superintendent during the charge conference.
7. Any concern by either the pastor or church may be addressed at a later meeting. The district superintendent may become involved, if deemed necessary by either party.
8. Continual patterns of parsonage abuse will be documented and stored in each pastor's file.

Check lists:

The checklist when vacating a parsonage shall include checks for:

1. Windows cleaned inside and out
2. Window treatments cleaned
3. Rugs and carpets vacuumed (shampooed if needed)
4. All hard surface floors cleaned
5. All appliances cleaned
6. All cabinets cleaned inside and out
7. Basement, closets and shelving cleaned
8. Light bulbs replaced
9. Bathrooms thoroughly cleaned, including fixture, tile grout, shower doors/curtains, medicine cabinets, walls, and floors
10. Garage, carport, and outside buildings swept and left orderly
11. All trash is properly disposed. (It is recommended that the church provide an extra refuse container during move week.)
12. All items needing the attention of the parsonage committee

The checklist when moving into a parsonage shall be used by the incoming pastor to rate the items on the move out list as excellent, satisfactory, or poor.

Housing Allowance Standards

1. The district superintendent of the church involved must review all housing allowance requests and the Bishop and Cabinet must approve such requests. Questions about housing allowance may be referred to the District Committee on Church Development for its ruling.

Each local congregation, conference agency, or district that decides to provide a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage and sells the existing parsonage, must place the proceeds from such sale in an escrow account, or use the proceeds for capital expenses (*The Book of Discipline 2008* /2542).

2. **The minimum housing allowance for 2012 shall be \$17,100.** The district superintendent must approve exceptions to this minimum. The allowance should respect the Internal Revenue Service regulations and rulings. The housing allowance should be clearly established, recorded in the Charge Conference minutes and excluded from Box 1 but listed in Box 14 in the W-2 form provided to the pastor.