

**Clergy Housing Policy  
Parsonages & Housing Allowances  
Western NC Conference  
The United Methodist Church**

**Revised 2008**

**Parsonages**

Every charge is required to provide “adequate housing” for its pastor(s), and such housing is not to be considered as part of compensation or remuneration.” (2004 Discipline, Par. 252.4e). In fulfillment of this requirement, most churches continue to provide a parsonage for its pastor and family. While the church owns the parsonage, church members and committees are urged to view it as the family’s home and to provide the family respect and privacy. (See Par. 259.2g16)

It is part of the work of several committees within the church to cooperate in maintaining the parsonage as a suitable, healthy, positive environment for the pastor and family. The duties of the Committee on Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations include, “To consult on matters pertaining to...housing (which may be a church-owned parsonage or housing allowance in lieu of parsonage if in compliance with the policy of the annual conference)...and to make annual recommendations regarding such matters to the church council, reporting budget items to the committee on finance.” (Paragraph 259.2g16) The Board of Trustees “have the supervision, oversight, and care of all real property owned by the local church...” (Par. 2532) While not required, it is strongly suggested that churches elect a Parsonage Committee, which might be primarily responsible for interior, furnishings, and decorating, while the Trustees maintain responsibility for the outside structure, HVAC systems, plumbing, electrical, etc. In any case, a cooperative effort is necessary to ensure that the parsonage is adequate, well maintained, and conducive to a healthy life for the family.

**The Parsonage Committee**

It is suggested that members of the Parsonage Committee, if elected, include:

- The chairperson or designated member of the Board of Trustees.
- The chairperson or designated member of the Committee on Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations.
- The pastor and pastor’s spouse as ex officio members.
- Other members as deemed necessary.

**Care and Maintenance**

1. While the church is expected to maintain the parsonage and respect it as the family’s home, the pastor and family are expected to respect the parsonage as the property of the church, and to keep it, including the attic, basement, and yard, in a clean and sanitary condition. (See Par. 259.2g16)
2. The family has the right to own a pet. However, the family is responsible for any damage to the parsonage structure or furnishings by the pet, including flea and tick extermination.
3. While cleaning the parsonage is the family’s responsibility, the church is encouraged to assist in matters that might prove dangerous or extensive, including such activities as gutter cleaning, outside window cleaning, etc.
4. Regular, expected maintenance is the responsibility of the church. This includes, but is not limited to, painting, HVAC service and repairs, plumbing and electrical repairs, structural repairs, mold and other allergen elimination, etc.
5. There is to be an annual review of the parsonage, scheduled with the cooperation of the parsonage

family, conducted by the Parsonage Committee, if elected, or by the chairperson of the Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations, the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, and the pastor, to assure proper maintenance (259.2g16). As a result of the annual parsonage review, a report concerning the parsonage should be made, including a statement on the physical condition of the parsonage and its furnishings, and a listing of long-and short-term goals. A copy of the report shall be presented to the Charge Conference, the Board of Trustees, and the Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations.

6. The annual church budget should include adequate funds for maintenance and furnishings amounting to not less than 1.5% of the value of the house. Unused moneys should be set aside in a separate fund and allowed to accumulate for use as needed for future maintenance and/or renovations
7. "In instances of multiple-church charges, the charge conference shall provide for an equitable distribution of parsonage maintenance and upkeep expense... among the several churches." (Par. 247.18) It is recommended that multiple-church charges maintain a joint parsonage fund to which moneys are budgeted each year and unused funds are allowed to accumulate for future maintenance and/or renovations.

### **Purchasing or Building a Parsonage**

The *Discipline* provides a process for purchasing, building, or remodeling a parsonage when the cost will exceed 10% of the value of the existing structure. (Par. 2543) When the Charge Conference elects a Building Committee, it is recommended that the pastor and spouse be ex-officio members of the committee. In order to allow the cabinet to make the best possible appointments, parsonages should be designed so as to accommodate families of various sizes and configurations.

When purchasing or building, the Discipline requires (2543.3b, 2543.4d) that on the ground floor there shall be:

1. One room that can be used as a bedroom by a person with a disability
2. One fully accessible bathroom
3. Fully accessible laundry facilities

### **Goals for the Parsonage**

1. Four bedrooms, with one located on the first floor and fully accessible by persons with disabilities.
2. At least one bedroom uncarpeted for persons with allergies.
3. A den/family/great room
4. At least two full baths, with one located on the first floor and fully accessible by persons with disabilities.
5. Kitchen cabinets with work space of standard height.
6. Closets in each bedroom (double, if possible), with linen closets separate.
7. Adequate DRY storage space large enough for furniture storage and out-of-season items.
8. Sufficient electrical receptacles, fire extinguishers, and smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to comply with building and fire codes.
9. Adequate heating system; zoning is recommended.
10. Air conditioning.
11. Insulation in ceilings, floors, and exterior walls to meet current codes.
12. Storm doors and windows, or equivalent.
13. Insulated metal or solid wood outside doors.
14. Dead-bolt locks on all outside doors.
15. Double garage, with automatic garage door opener.
16. Paved driveways.
17. A furnished study or study space. If study must be used as an office, a private entrance is necessary.

18. Adequate yard/play area. Safety should be considered.
19. Deck, porch, or patio with furniture.
20. Adequate outside security lighting.
21. Gutter guards.
22. Adequate off-street parking.
23. A safe exit when leaving the driveway.

## **Furnishings and Equipment**

### Inside the house:

1. Energy-efficient, family-size, frost-free refrigerator, with freezer compartment and automatic icemaker.
2. Quick-recovery, energy efficient water heater, 40-gallon minimum.
3. Energy-efficient washing machine, dryer and dishwasher; disposal, if possible. Laundry facilities are to be fully accessible.
4. Formal living and dining rooms will be fully furnished.
5. If there is a great room instead of a formal living room and den/family room, the great room will be left unfurnished.
6. Churches will furnish the pastor's study, whether located in the parsonage or in the church.
7. Clergy will provide their own furnishings for den/family room or great room, master bedroom, and two other bedrooms. If there are more than three bedrooms, those bedrooms will be furnished by the church.
8. The committee on staff-parish relations, the board of trustees, and the parsonage family will negotiate the disposal of the present furnishings at the time of the next change of appointment, beginning with the June 2008 changes.
9. Window shades, blinds, curtains and draperies in furnished rooms; shades or blinds in unfurnished rooms.
10. Floors: hardwood, wall-to-wall carpeting, vinyl, or tile.
11. Discarded furnishings should not be put in the parsonage.
12. Memorials or other gifts to the parsonage can be stored at the church's expense when not needed.
13. The pastor is to furnish linens, quilts, blankets, pillows, and cooking and eating utensils.
14. If a pastor desires to use his/her own furniture in one of the parsonage's furnished rooms (formal LR, DR, 4<sup>th</sup>. BR) and there is not adequate dry storage for the church's furniture, then the pastor will be responsible for furniture storage at the pastor's own expense.

### Outside the house:

1. Power lawnmower in safe working condition, adequate for size of lot, or lawn service.
2. Cable connection or satellite dish.

### Gifts to the Parsonage:

The Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Parsonage Committee, must approve all non-monetary gifts to the parsonage. Gifts to the pastor and/or the parsonage family should be clearly designated as such.

## **Record-Keeping**

### The Parsonage File/Notebook:

1. A book or file of pertinent information should be compiled by the chairperson of the Parsonage Committee and maintained by the parsonage family.
2. The file/notebook should include:
  - An inventory of furnishings, with dates of purchase, upholstery dates, swatches, firms, cleaning methods, etc.
  - Appliance inventories, dates of purchase, warranties, repair information, etc.
  - Heating, plumbing, and cooling systems dates of purchase, warranties, manuals, and service and repair records.
  - Yard improvements and equipment manuals and warranties.
  - Service and repair phone numbers.

### The Parsonage Insurance File:

An insurance file should be kept in the church office.

The file should include:

- Parsonage inventory.
- Photographs or videos of each room's furnishings.
- Purchase dates and costs of all appliances and furnishings

## **Housing Allowances**

Some churches choose to provide “adequate housing” for their pastor by means of a housing allowance rather than a parsonage, which, like a parsonage, “is not to be considered as part of compensation or remuneration.” (2004 Discipline, Par. 252.4e). There are many factors to consider in making such a decision (including rural, urban, or suburban setting; availability of housing in the area, etc.), and churches are urged to consult with their district superintendent before making such a determination. The cabinet has the following policies for housing allowances:

- The cabinet sets a recommended annual housing allowance, and district superintendents will consult with churches in setting their appropriate housing allowances, taking into consideration the cost of local housing.
- A church that pays a housing allowance will also pay, by voucher, to a pastor moving in, an amount not to exceed \$3000 to help with necessary purchases of appliances, equipment, and utility and other deposits. (This does not apply if a pastor is not changing residences.)

In addition to the above, as with churches that provide a parsonage, the church is encouraged to pay out-of-pocket moving expenses (over and above the moving allowance from the annual conference) incurred by the new pastor for the purpose of the moving of household furnishings