

Parsonage Guidelines

These proposals for parsonage guidelines in the New England Conference were originally established by the Conference Trustees and have been amended and proposed for extension by The Commission on Equitable Compensation in consultation with the Conference Board of Trustees. They have been written and revised with the following understandings:

- 1) It shall be the purpose of each church/charge to provide a parsonage, which will not only be a comfortable and safe home for the pastor and family, but which will also provide an environment which will be helpful in the conducting of effective ministry.
- 2) Churches and communities vary widely in their norms, resources, and settings. A helpful guideline shall be that the parsonage should reflect the norm or the average of the homes of the parishioners.
- 3) There are certain standards regarding health, safety, etc., which are not negotiable because they are stipulated by law or the Discipline. Where such matters are addressed in these Guidelines, they shall be treated as enforceable policy, with the same rigor as other policies of the Annual Conference, by District Superintendents, District Committees on Church Location and Building, and other appropriate supervisory bodies.
- 4) All parties involved will use common sense, reasonableness, and goodwill.

The following are goals toward which churches/charges with existing parsonages should be working in order that these guidelines might be fully implemented, insofar as possible within the next ten years. These guidelines are operable now for parsonages which are being purchased:

Indoor Living Areas

- 1) Living and dining areas of a size adequate for entertaining.
- 2) A well-equipped kitchen, with appliances functioning as designed and adequate counters and cabinets.
- 3) A family room
- 4) At least three bedrooms
- 5) A room of appropriate size and privacy for the pastor's study, if an adequate study is not available at the church.
- 6) One full-bathroom and a half-bath
- 7) Adequate closet and dry storage space, including closet space in each bedroom and other storage space distributed throughout the house.
- 8) A laundry area with washer and dryer

Outdoor Areas

Appropriate to the community setting, the following are recommended:

- 1) a two-car garage
- 2) Outdoor living space (such as porch, deck, or patio)
- 3) A safe and adequate area in which children can play

Water intrusion which leads to mold and mildew can create a health hazard as well as cause maintenance expenses. Outdoor grading and landscaping should direct water away from buildings. Foundation drains or other features (including on-slab designs) should be incorporated to reduce the chance of future water problems.

Services

- 1) An adequate supply of hot and cold water, in all rooms using water

- 2) A sewage system that meets local and/or state regulatory requirements
- 3) Weekly rubbish pick-up when available
- 4) Water treatment if needed, including regular periodic testing for radon, bacteria and other contaminants if a private water supply is employed
- 5) Smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers are required.
- 6) Radon testing if the structure has a basement or other below grade space
- 7) Outside water faucets and electrical outlets
- 8) Snow removal and lawn service to be determined between the appointed Pastor and the SPRC/local Trustees at time of appointment

Utilities

The following utility services shall be provided at the expense of the church providing the housing:

- 1) Electricity
- 2) Gas and/or oil for fuel, or such other alternative fuels as may be employed (e.g. wood pellets)
- 3) Water and sewage
- 4) Basic cable TV or satellite service
- 5) Basic telephone service
- 6) Internet access – preferably high-speed internet

Furnishings and Equipment

- 1) Floor covering for kitchen, bathrooms, and utility room shall be of durable water resistant material, i.e. ceramic tile, vinyl composition tile or vinyl sheet
- 2) Hardwood or laminate floor surfaces should be encouraged; wall-to-wall carpet should be limited or avoided due to maintenance issues (frequent replacement) and because it can retain allergens which may not be fully removed with standard cleaning
- 3) Window shades, drapes or curtains throughout, if the pastor does not wish to furnish his/her own
- 4) Outdoor tools: mower, hose, snow removal equipment as needed (See Item 8 under Services)
- 5) Where basements are used for laundry and storage of personal property and are subject to water infiltration during and after heavy rains/snow melt, it is strongly recommended that the trustees install adequate sump pumps with battery power backup.

Energy Conservation Features

- 1) All new parsonages must meet local energy codes for insulation in all exterior walls and spaces.
- 2) Consideration should be given to “energy efficient” windows and doors. New and replacement windows shall have insulated (double-pane) sashes in frames with a thermal-break. Wherever possible, Low-E / Argon gas-filled glass shall be used.
- 3) Domestic Hot Water and hydronic heating pipes shall be insulated in basements and crawl spaces;
- 4) New and replacement toilets shall meet the existing requirements, currently 1.6 gal per flush;
- 5) Sinks and shower heads should be fitted with appliances to regulate flows.
- 6) Appliances should be “energy star certified” appliances.
- 7) Consideration should be given to alternate energy sources including solar energy.

Maintenance and Improvements

- 1) It is important to plan ahead for repairs and improvements. These should be a line item in the church budget in the amount of at least 1 1/2 % of the insured value of the parsonage to take care of routine and emergency expenses, as well as creating a capital reserve to ensure

funding for structural, mechanical and electrical elements that are or will be in need of replacement. If it is not used in any given year, it is to be held in escrow for when it is needed.

- 2) The electrical service should be inspected, and all wiring, including the installation of circuit breakers, required number of outlets, wall switches, and light fixtures are to meet the National Electrical Code or other mandated local code.
- 3) It is important in the interest of both comfort and stewardship that all windows and doors be weather-tight, with either storms or thermopane glass, and that there be screens for all windows. If new windows are being installed, they shall be high-performance type.
- 4) Both the interior and exterior of the parsonage should be kept in such repair as to preserve not only its physical condition, but its aesthetic value, and this includes sensitivity to the historical design of a building when making changes. Painting should be done regularly, in consultation with the parsonage family. Wallpapering should be discouraged in new structures due to maintenance issues, but in cases of historic use or architectural preservation, wallpaper should be maintained/replaced on a regular basis
- 5) It shall be the responsibility of the occupants of the parsonage to provide for the cleanliness of it and the repair of any damage which they or their pets have caused to the interior, exterior, or grounds. An exiting pastor shall also be responsible for removing swing sets, above-ground pools, and other non-permanent additions. If, when pastor is leaving, the cleaning, restoration, and repair of damage have not been done, the pastor will be billed for same. If the pastor does not pay this bill, or contests it, a recording of refusal or negations shall become a permanent part of the pastor's record.

Re: Annual Inspection of the Parsonage and Dealing with Needs

In compliance with the 2008 Discipline there shall be an annual inspection of the parsonage by the Chairpersons of the Board of Trustees and Committee on Staff-Parish Relations. (Para 258.2G(16) and 2532.4) The purpose of this inspection is to discover needed repairs, improvements, and refurbishing, and to make short-term and long-term plans for accomplishing these, with prompt attention given to safety and health factors. Needs which arise between inspections should be taken care of promptly.

When a new pastor has been appointed, the incoming pastor (and spouse, if applicable) should tour the parsonage with a member of the Committee on Staff-Parish Relations at the convenience of the current parsonage occupants, and agree as to what repairs and redecorating are to be done before the new pastor moves in.

Safety and Security

- 1) If security is an issue in the community, whatever is needed to make the dwelling secure should be provided, i.e. dead-bolt locks, security systems, outdoor lighting, etc. A key change is suggested at the time of appointment change.
- 2) To make access to the house safe for occupants and guests, the driveway and the steps and sidewalks to all doors need to be of an even surface and kept in good repair.
- 3) All outside steps should have safe and secure railings.

Pets in the Parsonage

While it is recognized that it is the right of the parsonage family to have pets, it is also recognized that the ownership of pets requires the pastor to assume responsibility for them. At minimum these responsibilities include:

- 1) Caring for the pets in a humane and responsible manner.
- 2) Securing permission of the local church for the construction of any needed facility.

- 3) Assuming financial responsibility for the construction, maintenance, and eventual removal (at the time of a move) of any facility, such as a dog house, etc.
- 4) Replacing/repairing any damage done by pets to the carpets, floors, drapes, doors, lawn, etc., as well as cleaning and deodorizing to the approval of the appropriate committee and the incoming pastor.
- 5) Any cleaning, repair, or removal resulting from the ownership of pets that is not done by an outgoing pastor shall be billed to that person.
- 6) Breeding of animals is not considered reasonable use.

A Parsonage Notebook or File

It is recommended that the local church trustees maintain a notebook or file of records and helpful household data, including, but not limited to:

- 1) A record of the date and place of purchase of all appliances and equipment. Manuals and service contracts for these are to be kept together.
- 2) A record of the date and name of contractor and a description of any work done on the parsonage.
- 3) A record of any decorating or refurbishing, to include paint color, type, brand, etc.
- 4) Any special information necessary regarding shrubs, flowers, etc.
- 5) Any and all special licenses, permits and certificates issued by the municipality, county, state or federal government, including certificates of lead paint removal.

Parsonage families residing in the parsonage should turn over to the trustees any information which should appropriately be maintained in such a file, and incoming families should review and have available such records.

Appointment Change:

The responsibilities of the outgoing parsonage family at the time of a move shall include:

1. Removal of all personal property from the parsonage building and grounds
2. Leaving the house clean, particularly appliances, closets, cabinets, bathrooms, and storage areas.
3. Removal or arrangements for removal of all trash and discarded items.
4. Sanitization of house for pet odors and treatment for fleas.
5. Collection of all parsonage keys and transfer of same to the incoming family, being certain that all are clearly labeled.
6. As noted in the Maintenance and Improvements Section of this document, it shall be the responsibility of the occupants of the parsonage to provide for the cleanliness of it and the repair of any damage which they or their pets have caused to the interior, exterior, or grounds.

An exiting pastor shall also be responsible for removing swing sets, above-ground pools, and other non-permanent additions. If, when pastor is leaving, the cleaning, restoration, and repair of damage have not been done, the pastor will be billed for same. If the pastor does not pay this bill, or contests it, a recording of refusal or negations shall become a permanent part of the pastor's record.

An incoming pastor should be supplied with a "dwelling condition statement" by the Trustee Board upon moving into the parsonage. Any damage at the time of move-in must be listed on this form and returned to the Trustee Board. At the time of departure, the exiting pastor shall be presented with the "dwelling condition statement" issued when they moved-in which should indicate any damage beyond normal wear and tear with estimates to repair the damages.

The responsibilities of the church/charge at the time of an appointment change shall include:

1. Washing curtains, dry cleaning draperies and window coverings (if provided) or replacing as needed, and washing all windows, inside and out.
2. Cleaning all rugs and carpets (if provided), cleaning laminate, tile and vinyl floors and cleaning (or refinishing as needed) hardwood floors.
3. Ensuring that all appliances, cabinets, sinks and countertops have been cleaned and disinfected.
4. Ensuring that all smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers operate as designed and have been inspected and/or serviced annually or as required.
5. Ascertaining that the parsonage is left clean and all personal property of the previous pastor and other items not needed by the incoming pastor have been removed prior to arrival of the incoming parsonage family.

Re: Lead Paint – The Trustees of any local United Methodist Church or Annual Conference are held to the same standards as a “landlord” in all New England states. The local church Trustees are responsible for the lead remediation of the church parsonage and Conference Trustees are responsible for district/conference parsonages and staff housing to fulfill state law. To facilitate Open Itinerancy, the Trustees shall have professional assessment of all parsonages constructed prior to 1978 for lead paint, and develop a plan for remediation, along with a timeline for implementation of that plan and/or provide suitable alternative housing as necessary. Both the test results and plan for remediation shall be shared with the S/PPRC, District Superintendent, and District Committee on Church Location and Building (when the parsonage is held by a local church), or the appropriate supervisory committee, the Bishop, and the Annual Conference Session (when the parsonage is held by the Trustees of the Annual Conference). Lead remediation shall be done prior to children living in the parsonage.

Re: Handicapped Accessibility – It is recommended that bi-level or split level homes not be built or purchased for use as a parsonage, unless in the acquisition of such properties consideration is given to adequate facilities being provided which could accommodate pastor or pastor’s family member with handicapping conditions. The ownership of such homes limits the appointability of some pastors and pastors with family members with handicapping conditions. For further guidelines regarding accessibility see Para. 2532.6, 2543.3 (b), 2543.4(d), 2008 Discipline.

Re: New or Extensively Renovated Parsonages – When purchasing, building, or renovating an existing parsonage at a cost of more than 25% of its replacement value, the District Board of Church Building and Location is to be consulted as stipulated in the Discipline.