

PARSONAGE GUIDELINE

of the
**NORTH CAROLINA
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
of
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Offered by:

THE CLERGY CARE COMMITTEE

CONFERENCE CLERGY CARE COMMITTEE

A.) PARSONAGE GUIDELINES

1. **The Parsonage System:** Itineracy is at the heart of the deployment of United Methodist clergy appointed as pastors. This mode of pastoral assignment is dependent upon the use of the parsonage system. It is our expectation that the pastor in charge shall reside in a furnished parsonage. Each parsonage should meet the standards of the conference and in such cases as these standards are not met, it is the responsibility of the pastor, the charge, and the district superintendent to work together to move toward these standards.

2. **Charges Provide Furnished Parsonages:** The norm is that every full-time or student local pastoral charge shall provide a furnished parsonage (either owned or rented by the charge) in which the pastor in charge will live. Clergy couples (when two parsonages are involved) may negotiate with the cabinet and the charges to determine in which parsonage the couple will live. Disabilities covered with the Americans with Disabilities Act may require the use of alternative arrangements.

3. **New Churches:** In new church starts, a rental house or purchased parsonage may be provided by the Office of Congregational Development, or a housing allowance may be provided with the permission of the bishop and cabinet. A new church will provide a parsonage for the second pastor appointed to lead the church if, at the time, it has been at least five years since the church's constituting conference was held.

4. **Pastoral Home Ownership:** Upon written agreement of the pastor/staff-parish relations committee, pastor, and district superintendent, and upon approval of the charge conference and cabinet, the pastor may be allowed to live in his/her own house without remuneration from the charge other than standard utilities as long as the charge is ready to provide a parsonage at a pastoral change.

5. **Use of Furnishings:** Since it is the norm for the charge to provide and furnish the parsonage, it is the normal expectation that the pastor shall use the furnishings provided by the charge unless another arrangement is negotiated with the parsonage committee.

6. **Pastoral Assignments:** It is understood that *The Book of Discipline* gives the bishop and cabinet the authority and responsibility to maintain the itinerant system by appointment of pastors (§338). We understand that assignments are based upon the parsonage system and without regard to personal living arrangements beyond the normal parsonage setting.

7. **Housing Allowances:** If the charge prefers that the pastor in charge live in the parsonage, that shall be the case. Upon written agreement of the pastor/staff-parish relations committee, the pastor, and the district superintendent, and upon approval of the charge conference and the cabinet, the charge may *instead* offer a housing allowance to the pastor. This allowance shall be no less than 20% of conference average compensation for the North Carolina Annual Conference no more than 40% of conference average compensation for the North Carolina Annual Conference. Any exception to this percentage range must be approved by the Cabinet. Upon a change in pastoral assignment, the incoming pastor in charge may choose to live in a parsonage which the charge could provide either by purchase or by rental, if necessary. Housing allowances are not available to pastors with parsonages.

8. **Parsonage Committees:** Each pastoral charge shall have a parsonage committee, which shall be elected by the charge conference upon nomination by the Committee on Lay Leadership, that said committee shall be amenable to the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee and work closely with trustees in providing adequate housing for the pastor. (Reference is made to The Parsonage Committee in ¶2532.2 of *The Book of Discipline, 2004*). This Committee which is required to meet annually, should meet at least twice a year at the

parsonage. In charges of more than one church, each church should be represented on the Committee according to the percentage of ownership. Ex-officio members of the Committee should include the pastor, the pastor's spouse, chairperson of the trustees, and chairperson of the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee.

REPAIRS, FURNISHINGS, AND/OR SALE OF PARSONAGE

1. Repairs and furnishings should be divided among churches on a multiple charge by percentage of ownership.

2. When no interest is owned in a parsonage on a multiple church charge by one or more churches, each church having no ownership should pay its pro-rata share of the fair rental value of the parsonage and furnishings. Rental money should be placed in a savings account for furnishings and repairs. The church or churches which own the parsonage should repair and furnish the parsonage.

3. When a parsonage is sold, the principal proceeds resulting from the sale may not be used for the operating budget. (§2542, *The Book of Discipline, 2008*)

[The following suggestions are standards toward which to work. They are given so that the pastoral charge shall know what is expected of it, and that the parsonage family may know what to expect:]

THE HOUSE

1. Minimum of three bedrooms (four are preferable) with ample closet space in each. One of the three bedrooms should be on the first floor.
2. A family room with book shelves, preferably separate and apart from the kitchen.
3. Kitchen with ample built-in cabinets and large enough for family eating space, or a breakfast nook.
4. Area large enough for washer, dryer.
5. Two full baths.
6. Living room, large enough for parsonage entertaining.
7. A dining room is desirable, but where there is no dining room, the dining area should adjoin the living room in a living-dining room combination.
8. A home study in the parsonage is a desirable option in addition to the church office-study. It should have an outside entrance and be suitably equipped.
9. Garage with electric doors or a carport.
10. Dry storage space.
11. Adequate heating and air conditioning equipment and insulation, including storm or thermal pane windows and doors.
12. Adequate cable wire hook-up should be available.
13. Uninterrupted utilities (electricity, water, gas, phone) in the name of the charge; it is recommended that, effective no later than January 1, 2010, all parsonage utilities (water, sewer, electricity, gas, trash removal, local phone service) be put in the name of the church and paid directly by the church. Payment for cable TV, long distance phone service, cell phone service and Internet service for the pastor's personal use is ordinarily the responsibility of the pastor. Should these services be paid by the church, they may be counted as taxable income to the pastor (consultation with a tax advisor is recommended).

14. The outgoing pastor is responsible for leaving the parsonage fuel tank full.
15. The chairperson of the Pastor/Staff Relations Committee and the chairperson of the Trustees are responsible for reviewing all items on the "So You're Moving Check Sheet" to be certain that each item has been completed.

THE FURNISHINGS

The pastoral charge should provide:

1. All heavy furnishings, including electric or gas range, refrigerator with freezer compartment, water heater, washer, dryer, and a dishwasher. (A garbage disposal and a freezer are desirable options)
2. Bedroom, dining room, den and living room furniture. (One bedroom should be left unfurnished, so as to allow the pastor to have his/her own bedroom suite)
3. Good mattresses, floor covering, shades, blinds, curtains or draperies in all rooms
4. Some lamps and occasional tables
5. Discarded furniture should not be used in furnishing the parsonage
6. The minister's family should provide linens, blankets, pillows, baby beds, dishes, china, crystal, silverware, cooking utensils, radio, TV, and other personal items which they desire
7. The storage and payment thereof of unused parsonage furnishings and the pastor's furnishings is to be negotiated between the pastor and the charge
8. An up-to-date inventory of furnishings which includes dates of purchases and costs. This should be reviewed and updated at each Committee meeting. Pictures or video tapes are recommended and should be kept in a safe place other than the parsonage
9. When parsonage repairs or maintenance require the parsonage family to reside off-site for more than one day, the local church shall assist with lodging and meals.

PARSONAGE GROUNDS

Parsonage grounds should have foundation shrubbery, shade trees, adequate yard space for children, paved driveway and walks, and a power mower.

CARE OF PROPERTY

A clean parsonage is much to be desired by all. The parsonage is to be kept clean and attractive by the occupants. *Any abuse of the furnishings or house beyond normal wear should be the responsibility of the parsonage family.*

The following "pet policy" consistent with the standard policy for rental property is established.

1. The pet owner is responsible for any property damage caused by pet(s).
2. The pet owner must conform to all state and local ordinances.
3. The pet owner is responsible for liability for any injury caused by the pet(s).
4. The pet owner must provide for professional pest extermination of the parsonage when moving.

Walls, woodwork, and exterior should be painted by the church as needed. The expense of painting, sanding and refinishing floors, repairs, periodic pest extermination, cleaning of carpets and

draperies, are expenses to be borne by the church under normal wear and tear. As a part of the yearly review, the church should check and remedy any conditions related to mold and mildew.

MOVING

The Parsonage Committee must be allowed to inspect the house for maintenance issues within three weeks of the announcement of the pastoral change. Depending upon the wishes of the current parsonage family, the incoming family will be allowed to visit the parsonage with either a member of the Parsonage Committee or the current pastor in attendance. *This visit shall be scheduled to coincide with the incoming pastor's consultation visit.*

It is the responsibility of the parsonage family to leave the parsonage clean and in good condition when they move to another charge. As close to moving time as possible, each family will wash windows, screens and window sills, and leave curtains, draperies, carpets, shades, and blinds clean. Special attention needs to be given to closets, cabinets, and drawers. Bathrooms, kitchens, storage rooms, and attics must be clean. Refrigerators and stoves as well as all other appliances must be clean and in working order. Check light fixtures, exhaust fans, hot and cold air ducts to assure cleanliness. The parsonage yard must be well groomed. **Note that the parsonage occupants must have a professional exterminator treat the house if pets have been in the home.**

The following information shall be left by the pastor for his/her successor: All warranties, repair parts lists, instructions for use of equipment belonging to the parsonage, and an inventory including dates of purchase and cost of parsonage furnishings. The pastor should indicate when and from whom equipment was purchased, whom to call for service, and a list of persons to call (i.e., where to find various items, and when and by whom various improvements are to be made). Other information is requested in the "So You Are Moving" packet from the District Superintendent.

Provisions must be made by the current occupants of the parsonage for the succeeding occupants to arrive in a timely and welcoming manner. As such, the outgoing pastor shall vacate the premises by 11:00 am of moving day as designated by the Annual Conference and the incoming pastor should arrive no earlier than 1:00 pm. This two hour window will allow the Parsonage Committee to make a final inspection of the home and to have an appropriate welcome for the new pastor and family. *Outgoing pastors need to be aware that receipt of the moving reimbursement allowance is contingent upon the home being properly cleaned, vacated on time, and leaving information about the home for the incoming family.*

THE PARSONAGE COMMITTEE

The persons responsible for the parsonage should have a current inventory of parsonage furnishings. A copy of the inventory should be given to the minister and the trustees of the parsonage property. This inventory should include date of purchase of each item listed, its cost, and dates of renovations and repairs.

The persons responsible for the parsonage meet with the pastor and his/her spouse twice annually. Unless emergency circumstances warrant an immediate meeting in the parsonage, meetings should be scheduled at least one week in advance. Furnishings are to be evaluated at these regular meetings to decide the condition of pieces, to discard unacceptable items, check for needed repairs, and replace items if needed. The charge shall maintain adequate insurance for the replacement of

parsonage and furnishings. The pastor is responsible for insurance on the family's personal possessions.

Each year, the Finance Committee should set aside or include in the budget an amount for repairs and maintenance. A special parsonage maintenance fund should be established. A minimum of 1% per year of the replacement value of the parsonage should be placed in this fund, and this should continue to accrue until the fund reaches a minimum of 5% of the replacement value of the parsonage and then be maintained at that level. Each charge conference is urged to designate the chair of the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee, chair of Trustees, or chair of Parsonage Committee to make decisions for emergency replacements and/or repairs. The chairperson of the Committee on Pastor/Staff Parish Relations, the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the chairperson of the Parsonage Committee, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to assure proper maintenance.

PARSONAGE: BUILDING OR RENOVATING

In all matters pertaining to the location, renovation, and building of a parsonage, the *Discipline* should be consulted. The required legislation related to the above is found in ¶2535-2544 of *The Book of Discipline, 2004*.

Parsonage sites should be selected that will hold their value and be a wise investment, preferably in a sub-division. Whenever a new parsonage is built, its many uses should be considered.

Churches building new parsonages should be responsive to the building codes regarding those persons with handicapping conditions. Congregations receiving parsonage families with members having special needs should be responsive to the families' housing needs.

B.) ARBITRATION POLICY

The 1987 NC Annual Conference Session created the Clergy Living Committee whose responsibilities include *"to hear unreconciled problems regarding parsonage usage and to recommend solutions and alternatives"* (1987 Conference Journal, page 326). As the Clergy Care Committee continues the work of the former Clergy Living Committee, it will maintain the following policy:

1. Provision for clergy housing is the responsibility of the local church.
2. Issues regarding housing should be resolved between the clergy family and the local church.
3. If housing matters cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of all involved parties, the respective District Superintendent should be invited for mediation by the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee.

C.) CLERGY CARE COMMITTEE

The Committee will be composed of at least 50% lay membership. A lay person and clergy person will alternate as the chairperson each quadrennium. The Committee will meet as necessary, at least once a year, to review and update the Parsonage Guidelines as needed, review the application and brochure for Confidential Clergy Counseling Financial Assistance sponsored by the Board of Ordained Ministry through the Clergy Care Committee, review the report of the Chairperson of the Clergy Care Committee identifying the number of clergy and clergy families assisted throughout the year and the number of dollars given for the year to assist clergy and clergy families with confidential counseling, and to offer continuing support to, and of, the clergy spouses.