

PARSONAGE STANDARDS 2021



Par. 1100 Parsonage Standards (First adopted by the Annual Conference on June 10, 2004; updated August 30, 2019)

Philosophy for Parsonage Standards: The Conference affirms the policy of church-owned parsonages as the way to serve the churches in our Conference as it greatly facilitates the itinerant system of clergy appointment. Any exceptions to this policy must have the approval of the bishop and cabinet. Therefore, it is important that local church parsonages across the Conference meet certain standards so that differences in quality, size, and equipment are kept to a minimum. The Discipline is clear concerning the Annual Conference's role in setting parsonage standards and how the parsonage is to be understood by the local church and the clergy and his/her family. The 2016 Book of Discipline states that the Church Council shall "Review the recommendation of the committee on pastor-parish relations regarding the provision of adequate housing for the pastor(s); and report the same to the charge conference for approval. Housing provisions shall comply with Annual Conference housing policy and parsonage standards. Housing shall not be considered as part of compensation or remuneration." ¶252.4e The 2016 Book of Discipline also states that "The chairperson of the board of trustees or the chairperson of the parsonage committee, if one exists, the chairperson of the committee on pastor-parish relations, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to ensure proper maintenance." ¶2533.4 The parsonage is to be mutually respected by the pastor's family as the property of the church and by the church as a place of privacy for the pastor's family.

Guidelines:

- 1. Bedrooms:** There should be at least three bedrooms of standard size with ample closet space in each. It is recommended that one room on the main floor be adaptable to use as a bedroom.
- 2. Bathrooms:** A parsonage should have at least two bathrooms. One could be withshower only, and the one on the main floor should be a combination tub and shower.
- 3. Kitchen:** The minimum kitchen should include: adequate built-in cabinets, sink, stove, automatic refrigerator with frozen storage, garbage disposal (where sewer lines or septic tanks do not make this impossible), dishwasher, good light, and adequate electrical outlets. A breakfast area is desirable. Other appliances shall include a washing machine and clothes dryer (not necessarily in the kitchen area itself). An adequate supply of hot water shall be provided.
- 4. Living/Dining Areas:** Adequate living area for family life and entertaining guests must be provided. Depending upon the needs of the setting this could be a combination of the following rooms/areas: living room, family room, dining room, or a great room.
- 5. Study:** It is preferable for the pastor's office to be in the church buildings. However, the parsonage may be equipped with space for a study. Every parsonage should have adequate bookshelves.
- 6. Closets:** Adequate closet and storage space shall be provided throughout the house.
- 7. Garage:** Two-car garage or carport with storage room for tools and yard equipment shall be provided.

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- 8. Energy Efficiency:** It is recommended that conservation of energy be considered when purchasing appliances, when remodeling, and when purchasing a new parsonage.
- 9. Heating/Cooling:** A central heating/cooling system with the capacity to properly heat/cool the entire habitable part of the house and the proper thermostatic controls should be provided. The pastor shall be responsible for changing furnace filters to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the system. The church shall provide all other maintenance of the heating and cooling system.
- 10. Window Coverings:** Appropriate and tasteful curtains, drapes, shades, or other window coverings shall be provided for all rooms of the parsonage. Safe storage of unused window coverings shall be provided by the pastor.
- 11. Utilities:** All utilities shall be provided in the name of the church.
- a. Telephone: At least two phone outlets shall be provided.
 - b. Heating/Cooling: Adequate heating/cooling shall be provided. The heating/cooling system shall be maintained by the church and shall be inspected annually with regard to the soundness of heating/cooling exchanger, flue pipes, and chimney condition. If a wood stove and/or fireplace is in use, it too should be checked yearly. An instruction sheet should be posted near the furnace, or in a convenient place, to instruct on the maintenance and care of the furnace. The name of a reputable furnace company to be used should be specified. Suggestion should be made as the maximum/minimum temperatures and to the desirability of closing off unneeded rooms during the heating/cooling season. The pastor is responsible for the furnace filters to be changed at least three times yearly.
- 12. Insurance:** The church is responsible for the payment of insurance for the property. It should include homeowner coverage and shall cover at least eighty percent of the replacement cost of the parsonage and related structures and church-owned furnishings. It is recommended that the pastor obtain coverage to insure the pastor's family furnishings and belongings.
- 13. Parsonage Furnishings and Equipment:** The responsibility of the local church to provide "adequate housing" shall be interpreted by the Arkansas Annual Conference to include furnishings and other equipment. However, it is suggested that one bedroom be left unfurnished in all parsonages. The required items shall include an automatic washer, dryer, refrigerator, cooking stove, dishwasher, garbage disposal (unless septic tanks/inadequate sewer line make this impossible), and lawn mower. As applicable, the local church shall furnish a breakfast table, formal living room furniture, den/family room furniture, bedroom furniture (except as noted above), adequate lamps and lighting, and floor coverings. It is expected that the minister shall provide nonessential items such as a microwave oven, pictures, and accessories. It is permissible, and even encouraged, for the pastor and family to provide personal furnishings, as this is their home. The Pastor shall work with the Parsonage Committee and/or Trustees to provide for safe storage of unused local church-owned furniture.

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14. Parsonage Maintenance: Local Church Responsibility

- a. The local church board of trustees or elected parsonage committee shall properly maintain an adequate and comfortable home in good condition for the pastor and his/her family. At the convenience of the parsonage family, the chairperson of the Trustees, the chairperson of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and the pastor shall inspect the home to see what needs to be done, if anything, to meet these standards and to take necessary steps to accomplish these improvements. It is recommended that the maintenance of the parsonage should include provision for pest/termite control.
- b. The chairperson of the Trustees, the chairperson of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee, and the pastor shall inspect, at least annually, the parsonage and grounds to be familiar with said properties. They shall keep a record of their inspection so that they can take initiative in improving the parsonage and grounds. Each year every local church budget shall include money for maintenance, redecoration, and landscaping of the parsonage.
- c. All instruction books and warranties should be kept and the location of the books made known to an incoming pastor. The location of all cutoff valves, meters, water and sewer lines and similar items should be kept on file and should also be made known to an incoming minister. The local church shall inform the pastor of who has keys to the parsonage. These keys are for emergency use only by anyone other than the pastor and his/her family. (See above Philosophy for Parsonage Standards)

15. Parsonage Maintenance: Pastor's Responsibilities: The pastor should care for the parsonage as a good steward of the property, avoiding undue wear and tear. Pets sometimes present special problems. It is the responsibility of the clergy who have pets to inform the appropriate local church officers when moving into the parsonage. Pastors with pets should exercise care so that the parsonage is not abused, including professional pest control for parasites from pets. The pastor is responsible for any damage caused by pets, personal guests, or family members. The pastor's family is responsible for cleaning the parsonage when they move out, including residual tobacco smoke and any odors from pets.

16. Parsonage Grounds: The grounds around the house shall be well drained. The grounds shall be cared for by the parsonage family. If the lawn is unusually large, contains many shrubs, or requires a great deal of time to maintain in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood, the church should consider assisting the pastor with additional help or service. Landscaping and exterior care of the parsonage shall be the responsibility of the local church and shall be such as to be a credit to the church in the community.

17. Mutual responsibility Covenant: it is recommended that the Trustees and/or Pastor-Parish Relations Committee create a written covenant with the pastor, spelling out each party's responsibilities. The Covenant should be reviewed and updated annually. The covenant should include provisions for restoration to original form any personalized decorating on the part of the pastoral family. Redecorating should be done regularly with full consultation with the pastor.

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18. Energy Conservation: It is recommended that all parsonages have an energy audit as soon as possible to determine what might be done to make them more energy efficient...weather seals, storm windows and doors, insulation, etc. Many areas have utility companies that will do this for free or for a small fee.

19. Barrier Free Concerns: It is recommended that all parsonages built, or remodeled in the future, consider needs of the physically challenged such as tub bath, at least one bedroom, and preferably laundry be on the main floor, and a limited number of, if any, entry steps.

20. Safety: The parsonage shall contain certain safeguards for the parsonage family's safety. At least two fire extinguishers, one in the house (kitchen?) and one in the garage or utility area, shall be kept in working condition and shall be checked at the annual inspections. Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors shall be provided, at least one on each floor including the basement.

21. Implementation of these Parsonage Standards:

- a. Time: These parsonage standards, to go into effect immediately, are adopted for the pastor, local church board of Trustees, Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and/or Parsonage Committee.
- b. All substandard parsonages shall be considered for renovation to conform as nearly as possible to the above standards as soon as possible, but no later than January 1, 2006. District Superintendents shall keep a record of parsonages that are not meeting these guidelines and report annually to the Cabinet.
- c. A local church may appoint a Parsonage Committee to work with the Board of Trustees and Pastor-Parish Relations Committee in the implementation of these standards and ongoing oversight and maintenance of the parsonage. The Parsonage Committee membership shall include the Chairperson of the Trustees, the Chairperson of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, a minimum of three at-large members elected to three-year terms in classes (with the initial election to be for terms of 1 year, 2 years, and 3 years to establish the classes), and the minister or minister's spouse. The at-large members may not succeed themselves and at least two of the elected members of the committee shall be women.
- d. When there is a pastoral change, the house shall be inspected by the Chairpersons of the Trustees and the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, one other member of the Parsonage Committee, if formed, and the Pastor before the Pastor leaves for his/her new situation, to make a list of needed repairs. These repairs shall be accomplished prior to the arrival of the succeeding pastor. When moving day arrives, a final "walk through" conducted by the pastor with the above persons shall occur for a final assessment. Before a move, the departing pastor shall invite the incoming pastor to see the parsonage. Any redecorating should include consultation with the incoming pastoral family.
- e. **Housing Allowance/Parsonage:** The Annual Conference has confirmed the Parsonage System as the most efficient and effective way of serving the local churches in our Arkansas Conference. In certain special and limited situations, a housing allowance or use of rental property is permissible. A decision to exercise this option shall be made with the approval of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, the District Superintendent, the Trustees, and the Pastor. The resulting decision shall then be recommended to the Charge Conference for approval. The decision must also have the approval of the Bishop and cabinet. In

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order to maintain an open itinerancy system, churches which do not own a parsonage should make provision for a rental deposit/purchase down payment and initial furnishing purchases for any person moved into the appointment.

f. *Publicity of Guidelines:* Upon adoption, these parsonage standards shall be distributed to all pastors, Chairpersons of local church Board of Trustees, and chairpersons of Pastor Parish Relations Committee. The then current parsonage standards will be printed in the Conference Journal once each quadriennium. These standards shall be given to all new pastors and families coming into the conference by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

g. *Compliance:* The District Superintendent shall ask questions concerning the parsonage and its compliance with the parsonage standards annually at the Charge Conference. If a dispute arises in a local church or between a local church and the pastor, the District Superintendent should be contacted to mediate the issue.

h. *Church/Pastor Parsonage Covenant recommendation:* The Administrative Board of the Church has the responsibility to provide adequate housing for the Pastor (Discipline ¶251.4e). The Parsonage is to be mutually respected by the Pastor as the property of the Church and by the Church as a place of privacy for the Pastor's family. To facilitate this mutual responsibility we recommend that the Church and the Pastor enter into the following covenant. Both Parties should feel free to perfect this Covenant to meet any other desired or special circumstances. It is important that both parties feel satisfied with and responsible for the Covenant.

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(A SUGGESTED CHURCH/PASTOR PARSONAGE COVENANT)

Church Responsibilities:

While other church officers and bodies have a role in the provision, inspection, and maintenance of the parsonage, the local church Board of Trustees shall have the responsibility to ensure the parsonage meets or exceeds the standards set by the Annual Conference and the local church. The Church Trustees will maintain the physical structure and keep it in good repair. This includes all exterior treatments such as paint, shingles, and siding; the basic interior structure of the home including carpet and other floor coverings, interior decorating, and drapes or curtains. The Trustees assume the responsibility for all equipment such as the furnace, water heater, light fixtures, stove, refrigerator, washer, dryer, and lawn mower. The Trustees assume the responsibility for all furnishings provided by the church including maintenance and timely replacement.

Clergy Responsibilities:

The pastor will properly care for the property, keeping it clean and attractive both inside and out. The pastor will be responsible for light bulbs, furnace filters, lawn mowing, and snow removal; for effecting minor repairs such as, but not limited to, tacking or nailing of molding or door tops that may loosen up, and repairing or replacing items damaged by pets, personal guests, or the pastor and his/her family.

[This covenant would be signed by the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, the Pastor, and other appropriate local church officers.]