

Parsonage Guidelines: Adopted by the Synod Council 01/11/2020

A Parsonage is the home provided by the congregation for its rostered minister. The parsonage is an expression of hospitality by the congregation and therefore needs care and attention. The pastor and family may appreciate the parsonage as part of the compensation; however, the pastor forfeits the building of equity in a home and therefore providing an equity allowance is important and appropriate. Since the parsonage is the pastor's home, privacy should be respected. Congregation members are expected to follow the same standards of politeness for such things as entering the parsonage as they would for any other home in the community. The quality of the parsonage should meet a standard set by the homes of the majority of the members of the congregation. The tenant/landlord model may apply on occasion but its application is quite limited. Unlike a renter, the pastor normally has little choice of residence. The relationship between the pastor and congregation is not based on a lease or rental agreement, but upon a common bond in the service of the Church. Because it is the home of the pastor, the desires of the pastor should be consulted when changes become necessary. The following guidelines are a way to help both pastor and congregation establish a common understanding of expectations in regards to the parsonage.

Specific Guidelines

1. It is recommended that the congregation either appoint a parsonage committee or designate another congregational leadership group to administer these parsonage guidelines. Furthermore, said committee or group should provide a separate line item within the yearly budget of at least \$500 to make repairs for the parsonage when needed. Such a group or committee should inspect the parsonage at least once per year, with prior arrangements made with the pastor and family.
2. It is recommended that the following appliances be provided in the parsonage: stove, dishwasher, soft water system, humidifier/dehumidifier, refrigerator, washer and dryer, garbage disposal, heating system, air conditioning.
3. It is recommended that the following utilities be paid directly by the congregation or by utility allowance: electricity, gas, fuel oil, telephone, internet, soft water service, trash and recycling removal.
4. Items that would normally be supplied by the congregation include: paint, wallpaper, window coverings, floor coverings, light fixtures, ceiling fans, carpet.
5. In regard to the safety and welfare of those living in the parsonage the following should be considered and tended to by the congregation. The parsonage should have smoke

detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers available and inspected when deemed necessary. The electrical, water and sewer systems should be adequate. The windows, doors and roof should be weather-proofed against wind, water, and cold. Measures should be taken to make sure the basement does not flood. Insulation should be checked for asbestos and if present, corrective measures should be taken. If the parsonage has lead water pipes for domestic use, those pipes should be checked for high lead concentration, and the pipes replaced if the lead concentration is higher than EPA standards. If need be, contact and employ the services of an exterminator for pest control issues. Further measures for consideration of safety: use of dead-bolt locks, outdoor lighting, security systems and a key change at the time of pastoral transitions.

6. When a pastor first moves into the parsonage, the congregation should see that it is thoroughly clean and should usually plan to redecorate.
7. The colors, fabric, design etc., selected in the redecoration would normally be selected by those who will be living in the house in consultation with the appropriate committee. The congregation would determine the price ranges for these items.
8. The pastor and congregation should develop and annually update a list of necessary and desired repairs, maintenance, modernization, redecorating, and remodeling projects and together prioritize these projects.
9. There should be clear understanding about how regular maintenance and emergency repairs are to be handled. It is suggested that the pastor be authorized to spend a specified dollar amount at their own discretion. Any repairs in excess of this amount would require approval of the property committee or congregation council.
10. The congregation is responsible to provide fire and extended coverage insurance on the parsonage property. However, the pastor is responsible to obtain renters insurance to cover their personal property losses.
11. The pastor should be held responsible for any excessive wear or damage caused to the parsonage while they were living there. This would include any damage caused by children or pets. When a pastor moves out of a parsonage and before all financial obligation are completed, there should be an inspection of the property to see that it is left clean and in good repair. A helpful recommendation could be that a congregation request a damage deposit of \$500 in the beginning of the pastor's ministry. This amount could be paid in full or withheld from paychecks during the first 10 months (\$50 x 10 monthly paychecks, or \$25 x 20 semi-monthly paychecks). Such funds should be held in a separate interest-bearing account, to be returned when the parsonage is vacated in good condition. Such a fund is different than the recommended yearly budget line item which is used to make regular repairs.

12. The grounds around the parsonage are primarily the responsibility of the congregation. If the parsonage is vacant and the congregation is in a transition of a pastor, the congregation should tend to the care of the grounds and responsible for driveway seal if necessary. The congregation should also see that the lawn, shrubbery, and flower beds are in good condition when a pastor moves into the parsonage. The pastor may be expected to care for these grounds (mow; rake; remove snow; apply fertilizer, insecticides, herbicides) or these responsibilities may be shared by the congregation. Such conversation should be done between the pastor and the congregation. Furthermore it is helpful for those who are caring for the grounds that items such as lawn mower, snow shovels, snow blower, or other gardening equipment be purchased by the congregation and stored at the parsonage.
13. Members of the congregation should consider taking care of the grounds around the parsonage while the pastor is on vacation or on study leave.
14. The congregation should provide suitable garage space for the pastor's automobile(s). Normally this would be space for two vehicles.
15. In regarding pets in the parsonage, 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 rostered minister to assume responsibility for them. Such expectations would be caring for the pets in a humane and responsible manner, assuming financial responsibility for the care of the pet and replacing/repairing any damage done by pets to the parsonage.