

Taken from 2021 Desert Southwest Conference Rules, Policies, and Guidelines found in the 2021 Conference Journal.

CLERGY HOUSING POLICIES AND STANDARDS

A. RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. The ultimate responsibility for clergy housing lies with the Administrative Board/Council of the local church, with shared immediate responsibility given to the Staff Parish Relations Committee/Parsonage Committee and the Board of Trustees.
2. The responsibilities of the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall include:
 - a. Sensitizing the congregation to the fact that 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.
 - b. The chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee along with the chairperson of the Trustees and the pastor shall make an annual review of church-owned clergy housing. Following appropriate action by the Staff Parish Relations Committee and Trustees, the review form shall be submitted to the District Superintendent.
 - c. Follow the Parsonage Maintenance Guidelines "When There is a Change in Clergy Appointment."
 - d. Assure that all budget requests pertaining to the parsonage are submitted to the above-mentioned groups for recommendation for inclusion within the budget.
 - e. Recommend the amount of a housing allowance, if one is provided, and determine that it is within the requirements of the I.R.S.
 - f. Submit to the Administrative Board/Council the proper resolution establishing the Housing Maintenance allowance within the guidelines established by the I.R.S. This allowance is available for parsonage and clergy-owned housing.
 - g. Arrange for the rental of a parsonage, if that is needed, to house the pastor and family.

B. JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. It should be remembered that a home expresses character and that the condition of the parsonage reflects on the relations of the clergy family and the church. Happy is the pastor who can be proud of his/her church for the kind of parsonage provided for his/her use. Happy is the church whose parsonage family cares for the home provided for them as good stewards.
2. There shall be an annual review of the parsonage as noted in Section A.2.b.
3. Clergy families living in a church-owned parsonage are expected to maintain the parsonage in conditions of reasonable cleanliness and repair, avoiding the necessity of extensive cleaning or repair upon the change of pastors.
4. With the change of pastors, the clergy family shall be responsible to clean the parsonage and make it available for the new pastor's family. Any cleaning expense shall be borne by the clergy family (excluding carpets and draperies).
5. When a change of pastors is anticipated, this is an appropriate time for the church to consider repainting, new carpets and/or new draperies. The responsibility for the cost of any unusual repairs resulting from the clergy family's lifestyle shall be negotiated between the Staff Parish Relations and Trustees committees and the clergy family.
6. The church is encouraged to consider the tastes of the parsonage family in choosing colors and appliances.

C. MINIMUM PARSONAGE STANDARDS:

1. The parsonage should be an adequate and comfortable home for the pastor and family.
2. It should be located so it will be conducive to good living and accessible to good shopping areas, school and to the church.
3. There should be a minimum of three bedrooms, each of adequate size and allowing for privacy, and providing adequate closet space and storage space.
4. There should be a minimum of one and 3/4 bathrooms.
5. A dining area should be adequate for formal dining and entertaining.
6. The living room should be large enough so that entertaining or dining is possible if desired.
7. The kitchen should be adequate and large enough for a family eating area.

8. There should be an area where the family can “be at ease” and out of the usual traffic pattern whether it is a kitchen-family room, a den, or a recreation room.
9. The parsonage will be furnished by the church with major appliances, carpets and window coverings and will be maintained and replaced when necessary. Major appliances shall include a sink with garbage disposal, built-in dishwasher, stove, oven, microwave, washer/dryer, and refrigerator.
10. There should be adequate shelter for the pastor’s car, preferable a two-car area provided.
11. All existing parsonages need to be reviewed in light of minimum standards. Efforts should be made to develop a plan to upgrade the existing parsonage to the plan.
12. Where the church provides acceptable furnishing, but the clergy prefers to use their own, the clergy family is responsible for the cost of storage for the church-owned furnishings.

D. PARSONAGE MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES:

1. The parsonage shall be reviewed annually for maintenance needs, including exterior inspection and interior inspection. All interior and exterior maintenance of the parsonage is the responsibility of the local church. See Section A.2.b.
2. An emergency fund should be available in an amount that could be spent without consultation with the Finance Committee in order to deal with emergency repairs.
3. Termite control should be maintained on the parsonage.
4. Major renovation, repair and replacements should be done by the church as they are needed. The clergy family, not the church, should be responsible for correcting extreme or unusual damage caused by family negligence that is beyond normal depreciation.
5. Basic landscaping should be the responsibility of the church and professionally planned whenever possible. Basic ground cover (lawn and/or desert landscaping), shrubs, tools and equipment should be provided by the church. Routine yard care and maintenance should be negotiated between clergy family and church.
6. For the safety of the parsonage family, the church should carefully evaluate the overall security of the building and grounds. Included should be fire prevention measures such as smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, escape ladders where needed, a fire escape plan, and fencing for play areas and pets as needed.

E. CHANGING OF PASTORS:

1. The parsonage should be thoroughly inspected, repaired, and cleaned both inside and outside when there is a change of pastors. All should be in proper order. This is also a good time for a thorough inspection of plumbing and electrical wiring and appropriate repairs or replacements made. It is further recommended that a termite and pest control inspection be done at this time, and all necessary corrections be made through the proper church agencies.
2. The following suggestions are for creating a “guide” to be completed by the pastor, Staff Parish Relations Committee, and Board of Trustees which shall be given to the clergy family when it moves into the parsonage:
 - a. For each appliance:
 - 1) Operating instructions or manuals, etc.
 - 2) Repair instructions and servicing, repair personnel to call, which if any Staff Parish Relations Committee/Trustees member to call. It is understood that service calls and repairs of major appliances owned by the church should be paid for by the church.
 - b. Where to find:
 - 1) Sprinkler system valves
 - 2) Turn-off valve for gas
 - 3) Turn-off valves for outside and inside water
 - 4) Meters
 - 5) Fuse or switch boxes, circuit breakers and main switch - all properly labeled
 - 6) Size and change intervals for heating and cooling filters
 - 7) Various plants (bulbs, etc.) which are seasonal
 - 8) Any unusual appliances, equipment or household peculiarities
 - 9) Sewer clean outs
 - c. Numbers to call in case of emergencies: Police, Fire, Ambulance, Insurance Company, etc.

3. When it is possible, the parsonage should be open for visitation by the newly appointed clergy family prior to the effective date of appointment.

F. PARSONAGE UTILITIES:

1. The local church shall provide utilities: water, electricity, gas and basic telephone (not including personal long-distance calls), sewage fees, trash and garbage collection fees.
2. This policy should be the same for both church-owned and clergy-owned or rented parsonages.

G. PARSONAGE INSURANCE:

1. Insurance in real and personal property is the responsibility of the church.
2. The insurance policies should be reviewed annually and maintained at an adequate amount of coverage.
3. The pastor shall be responsible for insuring all personal belongings including personal furniture, clothing, books, jewelry, art, silver, etc.

H. HOUSING ALLOWANCE IN LIEU OF PARSONAGE:

1. It is deemed proper by the Annual Conference for a local church to offer and the pastor to accept a housing allowance in lieu of a provided parsonage.
2. Such an agreement is the responsibility of the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee to be determined in cooperation with the pastor. Where the church owns a parsonage, the Board of Trustees will need to be consulted as to the utilization of a parsonage which is not used by a pastor.
3. Where a parsonage is provided by the church, the church would continue to pay all costs for the maintenance of the house as if the pastor were living in it. In such a case the housing allowance shall be at least the fair market rental value of the parsonage.
4. Housing/Rental Allowance is limited to the lesser of (1) the amount of the housing/rental allowance designated by the local congregation, (2) the amount actually expended by the pastor to provide his/her housing including furnishings and utilities, or (3) the fair rental value of the housing provided
5. Unless legally dictated otherwise, this housing allowance income is not to be deemed a part of compensation for income tax purposes.
6. It is the policy of the Annual Conference for a church to own a parsonage if desired. The church may be free to sell that house if the pastor is not living in it for the purpose of buying another house as a parsonage. Should the house be sold (and a new one not purchased) proceeds shall be placed in an interest-bearing account. If there is another outstanding loan on other church property, the principal could be used to pay off that loan. If there is no other church debt on property, then the proceeds from the principal cannot be used for anything except to purchase another parsonage or for other church property capital improvements. The Appointive Cabinet has the authority to grant an exception to this rule.

I. PARSONAGE PURCHASES AND PERSONAL LOANS TO CLERGY:

1. Any sale of a parsonage owned by a local church or entity thereof to a pastor who has been appointed to that charge (or anyone directly related) shall be done in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary provisions governing church property and shall be reviewed and approved by a committee composed of a member of the Appointive Cabinet named by the Bishop, a member of the Board of Ordained Ministry named by the Board, who shall convene the committee and serve as chair, a member of the Conference Board of Trustees named by the Trustees, a member of the Council on Finance & Administration, and a lay member with experience in business and accounting practices nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Annual Conference. This committee shall be called the Housing and Loan Review Committee. The purpose of this committee is to assure that the long-term fiduciary interests of the local church and Annual Conference are protected and that the terms and conditions of such purchases conform to standard business and accounting practices. The Committee may consult with the appropriate District Building and Location Committee and the Chancellor of the Annual Conference.
2. The Housing and Loan Review Committee shall also review annually and approve the terms and conditions of any personal loans to clergy by the local church or entity thereof to assure that the fiduciary interests of the local church are protected and that standard business and accounting practices are followed. In accordance with accepted professional ethical practices in an itinerant appointive system, financial relationships shall not extend beyond the tenure of appointment to a particular charge. Such personal loans are highly discouraged.

J. HOUSING FOR CONFERENCE STAFF:

1. Housing for applicable clergy on conference staff will be by housing allowance only. The Annual Conference will not provide parsonages.
2. Housing allowances, where applicable, will be established yearly by Conference Finance and Administration in consultation with the Appointive Cabinet.