

## **Standards For An Adequate Parsonage**

In recognition of the need for common understanding of parsonage expectations in the longtime close relationship between lay persons and their pastors, the Annual Conference has adopted the following standards for appropriate parsonage housing. It is the hope of the Annual Conference that every parish will provide a parsonage that the church can be proud of since we are a parsonage conference.

We call the attention of all pastors and lay persons to the statement in the Discipline, which says, “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.” (Par. 2533.4 2016 Book of Discipline) 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.

### **The House**

*It is required that there be the following or equivalent functional and operational items:*

1. a living room
2. a dining room
3. a family room or recreational room
4. three bedrooms
5. a kitchen with adequate built-in cabinets, counter and work space
6. two bathrooms
7. a utility area
8. an adequate laundry area
9. closets in all bedrooms, study, entrance hall and linen storage
10. a two-car garage
11. bulk storage area
12. Insulation
  - a. In the case of a new parsonage, full insulation of ceiling, walls and floors.
  - b. Older parsonages should be updated in an effort to be good stewards of energy resources.
13. Automatic central heat and air conditioning
14. Storm or thermopane windows and storm or insulated doors, with screens for the entire house
15. Window coverings throughout house
16. Carpeting or attractive flooring in living and dining areas; appropriate floor coverings in kitchen and finished flooring in the remainder of the house
17. adequate wiring which meets standard of local safety codes, sufficient outlets and attractive fixtures.
18. a study/office with provision for privacy either at the parsonage or at the church

## 19. outside lighting

*It is desirable that there be:*

1. a fourth bedroom with closet, with at least one bedroom on the first floor
2. an attached two-car garage
3. a study located at the parsonage and an office at the church
4. a garden area
5. additional storage space
6. a second bath or half-bath for each floor
7. fence

## The Utilities and Appliances

*It is required that there be the following functional and operational items:*

1. an electric or gas cooking range with oven
2. a microwave
3. a garbage disposal
4. a dishwasher
5. automatic washer and dryer
6. hot water heater with adequate capacity
7. refrigerator with adequate freezer space
8. basic cable or basic satellite TV
9. cell phone service provided for the pastor (whether in a parsonage or on a housing allowance)
10. soft water service where needed
11. a power lawn mower or lawn service
12. adequate sewage disposal
13. smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers, (especially kitchen and near furnace) as required by state fire code for rental property
14. high-speed internet connection via cable modem, DSL or other method, or if such service is not available in the locality, a “mi-fi” device may be substituted.

*It is desirable that there be:*

1. a food freezer
2. an automatic garage door opener
3. snow blower or snow removal service

## General Items

1. The interior, exterior, the garage, and all equipment must be kept in good and workable

- condition and repair and the exterior appearance well maintained.
2. It is essential that the primary minister's study be supplied with computer, high speed internet service, printer, telephone, bookshelves, desk and chair, and copy machine. It is desirable that a fax or scanner be provided.
  3. It is desirable that the parsonage home be readily accessible to school, shopping center, and church.
  4. All new parsonage construction and/or purchase must meet, as a minimum, the housing construction codes for the county involved.
  5. Every effort should be made to provide energy efficiency and handicapped accessibility in all new construction. It should be as maintenance-free as possible.
  6. Renters Insurance for Pastors - Clergy living in church owned houses must have adequate coverage for their belongings and also for personal liability for their family. This type of coverage is usually NOT part of a church package and must be purchased separately by the pastor (renter's insurance). It seems prudent to place that responsibility in the hands of the pastor who will need to become a good consumer and verify the sufficiency of the coverage for her/himself. Placing the choice of carrier and coverage in the hands of the local church may result in insufficient coverage for the pastor/family.
  7. The required standards are to be met or exceeded in all purchased parsonages and/or new construction and are to be a goal for all existing parsonages.
  8. The family leaving the parsonage is expected to leave it in good order and clean. Unreasonable damage shall be paid for by the family doing the damage. (See policy on "Unusual Damages to Local Church Parsonages.")
  9. An air quality test for molds is to be conducted every other year in each parsonage, and the results be reported to the Charge Conference; and that if the test shows excessive mold contamination, remediation is to start as soon as possible with the pastoral family located to clean temporary housing, *paid at the expense of the local church*. It is recommended that the same test be done in churches.

### **Unusual Damages To Local Church Parsonages**

The Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church is known as a 'parsonage' conference. This means that churches are expected to provide parsonages, and pastors and their families are expected to make these parsonages homes. To assist in the appointment of pastors and churches, the Annual Conference has adopted certain standards for parsonages, and it expects that these standards will be the norm for all local churches as well as the Annual Conference. Most parsonage families and churches in the Indiana Conference exercise excellent stewardship in caring for church-owned parsonages. There are, however, times when unusual damages occur.

**General Destructiveness:** Unusual damages to church parsonages include those elements of destruction over and above the usual wear and tear which comes from family living.

**Pets:** Pets are an integral part of many parsonage families. Pastors will reimburse the church for parsonage damage beyond the normal wear and tear of living and this certainly includes responsibility for parsonage pets. Because of the unknowns with regard to pets, ***a local church will require a pet deposit of at least \$600***, in addition to an annual, physical inspection of the parsonage. It is suggested that this could be withheld in six payments over a six-month period and then upon the move of the pastor it will be refunded to the pastor if the pet has done no damage. If damage is in excess of this amount the pastor will reimburse the church/conference for actual damages.

### **Guidelines for Handling Unusual Damages:**

1. The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and the Board of Trustees are required to establish a scheduled inspection of parsonage facilities at least annually and have an open discussion of their findings with the pastor and spouse. This will permit both parties to review the general deficiencies of the parsonage and define programs and time-tables for improvement.
2. Any unusual findings shall be reported to the Superintendent.
3. Unusual damages should be paid for by the pastor involved. Various approaches for repayment of unusual damages may be necessary, including:
  - a. Withholding of funds from the pastor's salary which shall be documented in a signed Memorandum Of Understanding.
  - b. Creating a repayment schedule which might follow the pastor to his/her next assignment.
  - c. Creation of an escrow fund for unusual parsonage damage by those parsonage families who are identified as habitual offenders.
  - d. In every case, the handling of such matters must be done in consultation with the supervising Superintendent. Which shall be documented in a signed Memorandum Of Understanding.

### **Vacation Policy For Pastors**

All pastors pointed appointed and serving a full or part-time charge or Conference position within the Indiana Conference shall be granted, and are strongly encouraged to take, annual minimum vacations between Annual Conference sessions (Between July 1 and June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year).

All pastors, full time or part time, receive a minimum of 4 weeks of vacation per Annual Conference year. (including 4 Sundays)

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee or appropriate supervisory committee should ask that the pastor report annually, preceding the Annual Conference, regarding vacation time taken during the conference year. "Vacation" is interpreted to mean freedom from any responsibility in the

local church or charge, cluster, district, conference, area, jurisdictional, or General Conference. Vacation should be a time of rest, recreation, and renewal. It should not be considered by the church to mean that the pastor would be working at church camp, mission trip, attending a national convention for some board, commission, or committee of the Conference to which he/she may be a member, or other such activity. Student pastors who reside on the charge shall be granted 2 weeks paid vacation between Annual Conference sessions, including 2 Sundays, after completion of one full year of service from the first Sunday without regard to Annual Conference meeting.

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