

# CLERGY HOUSING GUIDELINES

of the  
NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE  
of  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Updated 2026

## A. PARSONAGE GUIDELINES

The Book of Discipline provides that the Staff/ Pastor Parish Relations Committee in consultation with the Church Council and Charge Conference shall provide adequate housing for pastors which complies with the Annual Conference housing policy and parsonage standards. The *2020/2024 Book of Discipline* further stipulates that this housing may be either a “church owned parsonage or a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage.” (paragraph 258.2g16) The following pages contain the policies, guidelines, and procedures that are to be used by the local churches and the District Superintendents of the North Carolina Conference in implementing the housing provisions in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*.

**1. Parsonages/ Housing Allowances:** A furnished parsonage, either owned or rented, or a housing allowance shall be provided for all student pastors and clergy under full-time appointment. For clergy couples the provision of one parsonage fulfills this policy. Disabilities covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act may require the use of alternative arrangements. If the charge prefers that the pastor live in the parsonage, that shall be the case. 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 and no more than 40% of conference average compensation for the North Carolina Annual Conference. The Conference Average Compensation and resulting housing allowance range can be found in the Compensation and Personnel Policies for Pastors guidance document published annually and made available by request and on the Treasurer’s Office website. When deciding on a percentage the charge should take into account the local housing market. Any exception to the percentage range must be approved by the Cabinet. Utilities are included within the housing allowance range. Utilities may be paid directly by the church as a part of a vouchered plan or paid to the pastor as a utility allowance. Housing allowances are not available to pastors residing in parsonages.

**2. New Churches and Faith Communities:** In new church and new faith community starts, a housing allowance will be provided in consultation with the Office of New Faith Communities.

**3. Pastoral Home Ownership:** When a pastor owns his or her own home and is appointed to a church which owns a parsonage, a pastor may move into the parsonage; or with the permission of the district superintendent and S/PPRC, may choose to live in his or her own home without remuneration from the charge other than standard utilities; or work out an amenable agreement where the church is able to rent out the parsonage and allow the pastor to live in his or her own home and receive a housing allowance.

**4. Clergy Couple Policy:** A clergy couple appointed to a charge that provides a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage shall be entitled to receive that housing allowance even if his or her clergy spouse receives a housing allowance from another charge or extension appointment.

When a clergy couple is appointed to serve two different charges both of which provide a parsonage, the District Superintendent in consultation with the clergy couple and the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee of both charges shall select the parsonage in which the clergy couple shall live. The charge whose parsonage is vacant shall consult

with the District Superintendent, the clergy couple, and Staff/Pastor Parish Committee of the other charge to determine a fair contribution to the shared housing arrangements. The charge whose parsonage is vacant shall contribute one half of the costs of refurbishing the lived-in parsonage at the time the clergy couple moves out. The vacant parsonage may be rented or sold pursuant to the provisions of paragraphs 2540 or 2541, and 2543 of the *2020/2024 Book of Discipline*. If the vacant parsonage is not rented or sold it still must be insured.

A clergy couple appointed to serve two separate charges one of which provides a parsonage and other of which provides a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage shall in consultation with the District Superintendent, the clergy couple, and the Staff/ Pastor Parish Committees of both charges determine a fair contribution to the shared housing arrangements.

A clergy couple appointed to serve a single charge that provides a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage shall be entitled to split the designated housing allowance for the purpose of pension credit.

Pursuant with the IRS regulations there shall be no reimbursement for travel between the church and the clergy's residence for usual daily commutes.

The pastor may use the furnishings provided by the charge or another arrangement may be negotiated with the Parsonage Committee.

**5. Pastoral Assignments:** *The 2020/2024 Book of Discipline* (§338) gives the bishop and cabinet the authority and responsibility to maintain the itinerant system by appointment of pastors. Assignments are made without primary regard to personal living arrangements.

**6. Parsonage Committees:** Each pastoral charge with a parsonage may have a Parsonage Committee, which shall be elected by the charge conference upon nomination by the Committee on Lay Leadership. In charges that have more than one church, each church should be represented on the Parsonage Committee according to the percentage of ownership. Ex-officio members of the Parsonage Committee should include the pastor, the pastor's spouse (if applicable), chairperson of the Board of Trustees, and chairperson of the Staff/ Pastor Parish Relations Committee. The Parsonage Committee shall be amenable to the Staff/ Pastor Parish Relations Committee and work closely with the Board of Trustees in providing adequate and healthy housing for the pastor and family. §258.2g(16) in the *2020/2024 Book of Discipline* states: "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." Other than the pastor and the pastor's family only one church officer (the chairperson of the Parsonage Committee, the chairperson of the Staff / Pastor Parish Relations Committee, or the chairperson of the Board of Trustees) may have keys to the parsonage. The chairperson of the Parsonage Committee, the chairperson of the Staff/ Pastor Parish Relations Committee, the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to assure proper maintenance and to give immediate resolution to any issues affecting the family's health and well-being. Adequate notice to the pastor of at least one week should be given before an inspection is scheduled. The parsonage inspection checklist is found on the Online Data Collection System and is due annually at the Church Charge Conference held in the fall of each year.

## **REPAIRS, FURNISHINGS, AND/OR SALE OF PARSONAGE**

1. Repairs and furnishings expenses 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 contribute its pro-rata share of the fair rental value of the parsonage and furnishings into a savings account for future repairs and replacements. The church or churches which own the parsonage should repair and furnish the parsonage. If the parsonage is rented, the rental money should be placed in a savings account for maintenance and repairs. 3. When a parsonage is sold, the principal proceeds resulting from the sale may not be used for the operating budget. (§ 2543 of the *2020/2024 Book of Discipline*)

## **THE PARSONAGE**

*[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 pastor's family may know what to expect:]*

1. Minimum of three bedrooms 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 a family eating space, or a breakfast nook.
4. Laundry or utility area easily accessible and large enough for a washer and dryer.
5. Two full baths.
6. Living room.
7. Garage with electric doors or a carport.
8. Dry storage space.
9. Adequate heating and air conditioning and insulation, including storm or thermal pane windows and doors.
10. Adequate Cable and internet access should be available.
11. Sufficient electrical receptacles, fire extinguishers, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to comply with building and fire codes.
12. Dead-bolt locks on all outside doors.
13. A study or study space. If the home study must be used as an office a private entrance is necessary.
14. Each local charge will provide the utility expenses for the parsonage. Utilities have been defined, in guidance from the Internal Revenue Service, to be: electricity, heat, water/sewer, trash pick-up, local telephone, cable, and internet access expenses. In order to increase accountability surrounding utility payments for the parsonage and to help ease transitions during appointment changes, the local church shall pay utilities directly to the utilities companies instead of through unvouchered allowances to the pastors.
15. The chairperson of the Staff/ Pastor Parish Relations Committee and the chairperson of the Board of Trustees are responsible for reviewing all items on the *"So You're Moving Checklist"* to be certain that each item has been

completed.

## **THE FURNISHINGS**

For charges with a parsonage the pastor may use the furnishings provided by the charge or another arrangement may be negotiated with the parsonage committee. The expenses incurred by storing unused parsonage furnishings and or the pastor's furnishings is to be negotiated between the pastor and the charge.

The 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 coverings, shades, blinds, curtains, or draperies in all rooms.
4. Some lamps and occasional tables.
5. When it becomes necessary to replace furniture or appliances in the parsonage, discarded or used items are not acceptable.
6. The pastor's family should provide linens, blankets, pillows, baby beds/cribs, dishware, cooking utensils, radio, TV, and other personal items which they desire.
7. An up-to-date inventory of furnishings which includes dates of purchases and costs. This should be reviewed and updated yearly. Pictures or video tapes of the parsonage furnishings are recommended and should be kept in a safe place other than the parsonage for insurance purposes.

## **PARSONAGE GROUNDS**

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

## **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 is 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. If necessary the pet owner must provide for professional flea 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, windows, 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. When parsonage repairs or maintenance require the parsonage family to reside offsite for more than one day, the local church shall assist with lodging and meal expenses.

## **MOVING**

The Parsonage Committee must be allowed to inspect the house for maintenance issues within three weeks of the announcement of the pastoral change in order to make plans to address any issues.

It is the responsibility of the parsonage family to leave the parsonage clean and in good condition when they move to another charge. 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. Light fixtures, exhaust fans, hot and cold air ducts should be checked to assure cleanliness. The parsonage yard must be well groomed.

In coordination with the chair of The Board of Trustees, 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. In coordination with the chair of the Board of Trustees the pastor should indicate when and from whom office equipment was purchased and whom to call for service. Other information is requested in the "So You're Moving Checklist" which is found in the Conference's Online Data Collection System.

Provisions must be made by the current occupants of the parsonage for the succeeding occupants to arrive in a timely and welcoming manner. Unless other arrangements are mutually agreed upon the outgoing pastor should 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. The Parsonage Committee will make a final inspection of the parsonage and provide 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 parsonage being properly cleaned, vacated on time, leaving information about the parsonage for the incoming family, and completion of the "So You Are Moving Checklist".*

## **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 pastor and the chair of the Board of Trustees. This inventory should include the date of purchase of each item listed, its cost, and dates of renovations and repairs.

Members of the parsonage committee will meet with the pastor and his/her spouse 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 to determine their condition, 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 repairs and maintenance. A special parsonage maintenance fund should be established. 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 is urged to designate the chairperson of the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee, the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, or the chairperson of the 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 related required legislation is found in ¶¶2536-2545 of *The Book of Discipline, 2020/2024*

Parsonage sites should be selected that will hold their value and be a wise investment. Charges building new parsonages must be responsive to the building codes regarding the accommodation of persons with accessibility requirements and needs. Congregations receiving parsonage families with members having special accessibility needs must be responsive to those needs.

#### **B. ARBITRATION POLICY**

If housing matters cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of all involved parties, the District Superintendent should be invited for mediation by the pastor or the Staff/Parish Relations Committee.