

# Recommendations for New Parsonage Standards/Assessments, Susquehanna Conference UMC

*(add utility aspect...also add D.S. date in the parsonage)*

## Rationale for a New Focus/Change

- 1) Many parsonages do not meet current design/standards, with little evidence for hope of doing so.
- 2) Given the significant costs/challenges of new construction, improvement to parsonages sometimes actually is inhibited.
- 3) If the aim is to ensure that parsonages are the best “home” for clergy/clergy families, a new focus is needed to bring about realistic action through respectful and open communication.
- 4) Many clergy AND laity who have overseen parsonage inspections have found:
  - a. Current Parsonage Standards are unrealistic both contextually and financially, and are “check-list” heavy, often failing to lead to action or improvements.
  - b. Current Parsonage Standards/checklists steer toward a cumbersome and growing checklist to be completed as task rather than a guide for relational action.
- 5) This proposal asserts that standards for existing parsonages should be a totally separate conversation from “new construction” standards to ensure the best possible residence for clergy/clergy families. (Conversations and standards/action insofar as new construction or the purchase of a parsonage would involve be the responsibility of the District Superintendent, the District Building of Church Location and Building, and Conference Trustees.)
- 6) “Housing Allowances: - Parsonages are the “norm” in The Susquehanna Conference. Accordingly, authority for any exception to this SUSUMC “norm” rests with the resident Bishop and Cabinet in accordance with The Book of Discipline.
- 7) FINALLY- ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES/NEEDS ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS: Clergy/clergy family accessibility issues have been respectfully and caringly handled in many contexts by congregations in concert with the Conference connection. Thus, this policy advocates response to such accessibility issues on a case-by-case basis. This approach would maximize resources in all contexts and better assure the best possible parsonage housing for clergy residence.

## PARSONAGE EXPECTATIONS, SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE UMC

The itinerant system is the method by which ordained clergy are appointed by the Bishop to fields of labor. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of each local church/charge to provide adequate housing and appropriate residential standards to ensure that the pastor and family have a “home” (Housing allowances are the rare exception, appropriate only as approved/directed by the Bishop through initial consultation with the District Superintendent).

Local church leadership must strive to ensure that the residence is such that it supports the physical and emotional/mental well-being of the appointed clergy and their family.

This document provides for a “Living Conversation” for care and support of clergy/clergy families in order that a church/charge house can truly become “home.” This document seeks to lift this tenet up as primary, and it should be the goal of each church/charge to fulfill this purpose. In order for this “Living Conversation” to work, we must understand “context” in order to enter healthy conversations of assessment and action (For example, if the parsonage has plaster walls that are in good repair, the “norm” of “drywall” is not to become a burden that requires replacement. Contextual and common-sense conversation is the basis for fulfilling these expectations).

***(NOTE: This standard document and report is intended to foster Communication, Conversation, and Action of Achievable and Measurable means Standards for new construction or new parsonage purchase are processed with the District Superintendent, District Board of Church and Location and Building, and/or the Conference Trustees.)***

**PARSONAGE INSPECTION CONVERSATION/ACTIONS:**

**I. SOUND CONSTRUCTION and LOCAL CODES:**

Does the parsonage evidence a state of sound construction, and is the parsonage in compliance with local building, utility, and zoning codes?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**II. THE LOT/GROUNDS:**

Are the grounds well-graded and drained so as to prevent basement dampness and no standing water on the grounds?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

Is landscaping presentable, and is there sufficient area for recreation and leisure? And is there adequate storage on the grounds (for lawnmower, snow removal items, small recreational items)?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**III. ENTRANCES:**

Are entrances under cover with adequate lighting, and are doors equipped with functional locks, including deadbolts?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**IV. WINDOWS, DOORS AND TREATMENTS:**

Are the windows and doors functional and energy-efficient, including screens and storm windows?

Are window coverings of good quality and neutral color?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**V. ELECTRICAL:**

Is electrical service safe and sufficient-including appropriate number of receptacles in each room – with GFI outlets in rooms with a nearby water station

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**VI. HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEMS:**

Does the HEATING system function adequately and efficiently- meeting a minimum heat-set temperature of 68-70 degree?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

Does the COOLING system (Central Air or Window Units to be provided) function adequately and efficiently- meeting a minimum cooling-set temperature of 74 degrees?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**VII. ACCESSIBILITY:**

Each church/charge should regularly assess and strive for parsonage accessibility (for clergy/clergy families as well as parishioners who may visit the pastor's home).

a) Is the entrance wheelchair-width and is the first floor accessible?

YES

NO

(please note below)

b) Is there a bedroom and full bath on the first floor?

YES

NO

(please note below)

c) Is there a fully accessible laundry facility on the first floor?

YES

NO

(please note below)

Could modifications be made to improve accessibility to this parsonage?

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**VIII. GARAGE:**

A two-car garage is preferable with easy-operating overhead doors and an alternate access door. Adequate overhead and access lighting, along with sufficient outlets, should be provided. Is the house wheelchair-accessible from the garage? (Are these garage standards being met?)

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**IX. BASEMENT:**

Is the basement adequately lighted, dry, free of debris, and offering adequate storage space?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

NOTE: Is the basement: A) Equipped with a dehumidifier; B) Tested every 10 years for Radon Gas or have a functioning Radon Abatement system; and equipped with C) A Ground-Fault Interrupt (GFI)-outlet?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**X. APPLIANCES/EQUIPMENT**

Does the parsonage have the following fully operational/energy efficient the following appliances?

- Oven/Range
- Refrigerator
- Washer
- Dryer
- Lawn Mower
- Snow Blower (or shovels as appropriate)

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**XI. INTERIOR ROOMS**

Are all interior walls of drywall construction and painted in neutral colors? (Paneling is discouraged.)

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

Is all interior flooring in good condition?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**KITCHEN**

Is there adequate working and seating space in the kitchen? Is there adequate counter, cabinet and shelving/drawer space?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**LIVING ROOM**

Is a minimum of 180 sq. ft or larger provided?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

Is a ceiling light or at least one wall switched outlet provided?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**DINING ROOM**

Is there adequate gathering space in the dining room, with appropriate lighting?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**FAMILY ROOM**

Is there sufficient gathering space, and a ceiling light or at least one wall-switched outlet?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**BATHROOMS**

Are the bathrooms located in such a way as to respect privacy?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

Is the family bathroom located on the same floor as most of the bedrooms? Is a tub with shower and adequate linen storage provided? Is at least a half-bath provided on the main floor of the house?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

Are the bathrooms equipped with GFI outlets, functional exhaust fan, ceiling light, functional, modern plumbing, and the floor covered with non-skid tile or linoleum?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**LAUNDRY ROOM**

Is a laundry room provided with adequate lighting, work sink, and workspace?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**BEDROOMS**

Does the parsonage have at least 3 bedrooms?

Yes

No

(please note below)

Does each bedroom have sufficient closet space, and appropriate flooring?

Yes

No

(please note below)

Does each bedroom have a ceiling light or at least one wall-switched outlet for light?

Yes

No

(please note below)

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**PASTOR’S STUDY/OFFICE:**

Is there adequate and functional space dedicated for the pastor’s home office/work study?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**STUDY/CHURCH OFFICE COMBINED**

o In situations where the church/charge office is situated in the parsonage, a separate exterior entrance is required; a half-bath is required; and appropriate furnishings and office equipment are essential. If applicable in your context, please answer the following:

**DOES THIS STUDY/CHURCH OFFICE MEET THE ABOVE PARAMETERS?**

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**XII. EXTERIOR STANDARDS**

Is the parsonage exterior (wood, siding, windows/frames/lighting/roofing/spouting) in good shape so as to care for the family and appropriately care for this property?

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*

**XIII. UTILITIES\*/SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED:**

- 1) Heating and Cooling (Central Air or Window Units) [Electric, gas, oil, solar]
- 2) Electricity
- 3) Water (If private well, testing and treating for potable water should occur, with treatment systems added and bottled water provided if water does not meet potable standards.)
- 4) Refuse (garbage pickup) and recycling (where offered) services shall be provided.
- 5) Basic phone service (a landline or one basic cell phone)
- 6) Antenna for Television, OR the connection/installation fee for basic TV (NOT ongoing service)
- 7) Functional smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers on each floor

**Are the utility provisions as set forth above being fulfilled?**

YES

NO

*Explain:*

*Next-Step action and timetable:*



**XVI. ANNUAL, MANDATED, PARSONAGE INSPECTION**

Each church/charge and each appointed pastor residing in a parsonage MUST schedule an annual parsonage inspection at the pastor’s convenience. Said inspection should include walkthrough by the clergy (and spouse as desired), Pastor (Staff) Parish Relations Chair or designee, and Trustee Chair or designee. This form should be used to guide the inspection, facilitate conversation, and serve as the basis for outlining action steps. This Parsonage Inspection should be presented to Trustees and/or Leadership Council, and the Church/Charge Conference.

***The District Superintendent must be notified of any inadequacies and informed of the timetable for action toward correction/upgrade and compliance. Once the reported action is completed, the District Superintendent shall be notified.***

**XVII. AT THE TIME OF APPOINTMENT CHANGE AND TRANSITION:**

Exiting clergy shall:

- 1) Remove all personal property and arrange for removal of unwanted items, trash, etc.
- 2) Leave the house clean, including appliances, cabinets, garages, etc.
- 3) Sanitize the house of pet odors, etc.
- 4) Remove any items or aspects introduced into the house/property by clergy/clergy family.
- 5) Surrender all parsonage keys and garage accesses.

The church/charge shall:

- 1) Attend to window treatments, cleaning, and upgrades.
- 2) Clean all carpets and flooring.
- 3) Assess smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers, and appliances.
- 4) Assess electrical, plumbing, security, and all parsonage systems- taking appropriate action for necessary upgrades.
- 5) Initiate repairs, and paint (neutral colors).

This completed report must be shared with Trustees and/or Council, and the District Superintendent for review, and then must be presented for adoption to the Church/Charge Conference.

**SIGNATURES**

Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

PPR/SPRC Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Trustee Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

District Superintendent: \_\_\_\_\_