Parsonage Standards
The West Virginia Annual Conference
The United Methodist Church
Approved – June 2001

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE:

These standards are provided by the West Virginia Annual Conference to help churches and clergy to achieve consistent living conditions necessary for effective Christian ministry.

The West Virginia Annual Conference affirms the use of parsonages throughout the conference. Standards provide for the cooperative care and maintenance of the parsonage. It is to be celebrated that the cooperative arrangements are a way for both the church and the pastor to enter into a joint stewardship and mutual respect of the property that is maintained as a perpetual residence for pastoral occupants. It is understood that at least an annual needs assessment and review of the residence will be conducted on an agreed date and time.

The church today demands that a pastor be not only an itinerant preacher, as was the early circuit rider, but a resident pastor and responsible citizen in the community. In order to meet these needs, and to call persons to a dedicated ministry, the church must provide living conditions which will establish an adequate foundation for effective ministry.

DEFINITIONS:

The words "shall" and "recommended" as used in this document are defined as follows:

Shall: indicates a required component of the standards.

Should: indicates an item which is strongly recommended by the standards.

Recommended: indicates an item which should be considered when possible and which would enhance parsonage living.

1. STRUCTURAL STANDARDS

Parsonage *should* be of sound construction, providing living space of approximately 2,000 square feet or more.

1.2. Location:

1.2.1. Parsonage *should* be located in or near the community of the church or in a central location if more than one church is on the charge.

1.2.2. The parsonage *shall* be located in a residential neighborhood.

1.3 The parsonage *shall* meet all local building, utility and zoning codes.

1.3.1. The parsonage *shall* include a kitchen, living room, dining room, family room, a minimum of 3 bedrooms, preferably 4, laundry room, garage and storage, a minimum of 2 baths.

1.3.2. All plumbing, heating, and electrical systems *shall* meet the local and/or state building codes.

1.4 The office *should* be provided in the church. However, if it is not provided in the church, it *should* be provided in the parsonage. Office (either in the parsonage or church) *should* be equipped with adequate bookshelves, desk, files, storage closet for supplies, copying machine, computer or word processor, and telephone.

1.4.1. Charge *should* consider Internet access and cellular phone provided for pastor's use.

1.4.2. If the office is in the house, it *should* have an outside entrance.

1.4.3. The office space is in addition to rooms required in section 1.3.

1.5 Entrances: Entrances *should* be sheltered, and doors *shall* have workable locks.

1.6. Windows and Doors:

1.6.1. It is *recommended* that all windows throughout the house be energy efficient. Suitable window treatments *shall* be provided.

1.6.2. All windows and fixtures *should* be in good working order.

1.6.2. Window/door screens and storm windows (or combination windows) *shall* be provided.

1.7. Electrical: Electrical service *shall* meet all state and local codes. There *should* be a minimum of 200 amp grounded service with labeled circuit breaker. There *should* be a maximum of 6 receptacles or lights to each breaker. There *should* be a minimum of one electrical outlet on each wall longer than 6 feet to limit the need for extension cords.

1.7.1. Electrical work shall be done by certified personnel.

1.8. Heating and Cooling

1.8.1. Central heat which can maintain 68 degrees throughout the house is *recommended.*

1.8.2. Insulation which meets the standards of the local utility company *shall* be provided to add to the comfort of the house and the conservation of fuel.

1.8.3. Central air conditioning, window air conditioners, or ceiling fans in each bedroom *shall* be provided for summer cooling according to the climate of the area. A whole house attic fan is recommended.

1.9 Water

1.9.1. Domestic hot water, with a forty (40) gallon minimum tank, *shall* be provided.

1.9.2. Outside faucets *shall* be provided.

1.9.3. Effective drainage and sewage *shall* be provided.

2. LOT STANDARDS

2.1. Grounds: The grounds *should* be well-graded and drained. A relatively flat lot is preferable.
The parsonage lot *shall* include lawn, shade trees, shrubbery, space for garden and flower beds and hard surface walks to each door.

2.2. Maintenance, lawn care and snow removal *shall* be mutually arranged between the pastor and the charge.

2.2.1. Power lawn mower, hedge trimmer and snow removal equipment (if needed) *shall* be provided by the church.

2.3. The pastor or family will care for personally desired gardens and play equipment. The possible removal of such equipment *shall* be negotiated between the pastoral family and the Parsonage Committee prior to a pastoral transition.

2.4. A safe fenced area *should* be provided in the yard as needed for children and/or pets.

3. HANDICAP ACCESSIBILITY

(*2000 Discipline*, ¶ 2543 or applicable sections of current Discipline.)

3.1. It is *recommended* that no bi-level or split level homes be built or purchased for use as parsonages in the West Virginia Annual Conference. Continued use of such homes as parsonages limits the appointability of some pastors and pastors with family members with handicapping conditions.

3.2. It is *recommended* that doorways accommodate wheelchair accessibility.

3.3. It is *recommended* that ramped entrances have a 2% or less gradient.

3.3. When a parsonage is bought or built, it *shall* provide on the ground level: 1) one room that can be used as a bedroom by a person with a disability; 2) a fully accessible bathroom; 3) fully accessible laundry facilities.
(2000 Discipline ¶2543.d).

4. EXTERIOR HOUSE STANDARDS

4.1. It is *recommended* that the exterior finish of the house be of low maintenance materials such as brick, stone, or durable non-asbestos siding.
4.2. All surfaces *should* be kept in good repair including: painting of siding and trim, repointing brick or stone and caulking of windows.
4.3. The parsonage roof *shall* be of good quality and inspected and repaired regularly to prevent leaks.
4.4. Sidewalks *shall* be smooth and of concrete or other durable surfaces.
4.5. Adequate lighting and Ground Fault Interrupt (GFI) outlets *shall* be provided for exterior electrical work.

5. SECURITY

5.1. Parsonages *shall* provide a safe and secure environment.
5.2. Deadbolt locks on external doors, secure windows with locking system, and external lights *shall* be provided.
5.3. Electronic security systems or other security measures *shall* be provided in areas where there is a threat of crime or violence. The threat of crime *shall* include theft and burglary of other homes or businesses in the area.
5.4. Working and approved smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors *shall* be provided. Radon testing, when needed, *shall* be provided.

6. GARAGE

6.1. There *should* be a garage or carport. Two car capacity is preferable.
6.2. If a garage is not provided, off-street parking *should* be available for two cars.
6.3. Garage floor and driveway *shall* be of hard surface and in good repair.
6.4. There *shall* be adequate overhead lighting and access lighting.
6.5. There *shall* be an easy operating overhead door. Automatic door opener is *recommended.*

7. BASEMENT

(where applicable)

7.1 The area *shall* be clean and dry, of either concrete or block construction, painted with water-sealing masonry paint, with a sealed or covered concrete floor.
7.2 The area *shall* be regularly tested for radon and treated as needed.
7.3 Dry, water free space *shall* be available for storage of personal items and moving wardrobes.
7.4 A de-humidifier *shall* be furnished if necessary.
7.5 If required living space is located in the basement, then these areas *shall* meet the standards listed for rooms specified in section 9 and have a finished ceiling.

8. STORAGE

8.1 Heated storage *shall* be provided to protect liquid products, i.e., paint, canned goods, etc. as well as excess furnishings, boxed items, off-season clothing, food freezer, etc., that require protection from rust, mildew and cracking.

8.2 Storage for lawn and garden tools, mowers, snow blowers, tillers, tires, ladders, etc., may be unheated.

8.3 Sometimes a charge may need to expand or add storage due to pastoral families moving from parsonages of various sizes and the needs that may be encountered due to that fact.

8.4 All storage areas *shall* be kept safe and secure, dry, and readily accessible.

9. INTERIOR ROOM STANDARDS

9.1 Kitchen

9.1.1 Utilities

9.1.1.1. A family sized (20-22 cu. ft) frost-free refrigerator *shall* be provided.

9.1.1.2. A high-efficiency range, preferably self-cleaning *shall* be provided.

9.1.1.3. A dishwasher *shall* be provided.

9.1.1.4. A garbage disposal *shall* be provided when it would not interfere with septic tank use.

9.1.2. A double sink with mixing faucets *shall* be provided.

9.1.3. Kitchen cabinets *shall* be of standard size and quality with drawers and shelving. Counter space, covered with easily maintained surface of ceramic, laminate, or Corian type material, *shall* be provided. Sufficient storage space for food, dishes and cooking utensils *shall* be provided.

9.1.4. At least three GFI electrical outlets *shall* be provided above the counters. A minimum of two circuits for the area *should* be provided and consideration should be given to dedicated circuits for the refrigerator, dishwasher and microwave oven.

9.1.5. An attractive ceiling light *shall* be provided.

9.1.6. Floors *shall* be covered with non-skid linoleum/tile or stain resistant carpet.

9.1.7. There *should* be adequate space for a dinette or breakfast bar in the kitchen.

9.2 Living Room

9.2.1 Shall provide a minimum of 180 square feet (15' X 12') or larger.

9.2.2 Wall to wall carpet or hardwood floor with an area rug *shall* be provided.

9.3 Dining Room

9.3.1. *Shall* be adequate size and easily accessible for family dining and entertaining.

9.3.2 Wall to wall carpet or hardwood floor and area rug *shall* be provided.

9.3.3 There *should* be an attractive overhead light fixture.

9.4 Bathrooms

9.4.1. Tile or vinyl floor covering is preferable.

9.4.2. Modern, workable fixtures *shall* be provided.

9.4.3. Outlets above the countertops *shall* be GFI standard.

9.4.4. A switch controlled ceiling light and ventilation fan *shall* be provided.

9.4.5. A minimum of one bath *shall* provide a tub with shower in good working condition.

9.4.6. A mirror and a medicine cabinet, or a combination *shall* be provided.

9.4.7. Standard towel bars *shall* be provided.
9.4.8. Adequate linen storage, with shelving, *shall* be provided.

9.5 **Bedrooms**
9.5.1. All bedrooms *shall* be individually accessible.
9.5.2. Each room *shall* have a closet.
9.5.3. Wall to wall carpet or hardwood floors with area rugs *shall* be provided.
9.5.4. Each room shall be large enough for ease of movement around furniture. Suggested minimum for master Bedroom : 180 sq. ft. (15' X 12'). Other bedrooms minimum of 144 sq. ft (12' x 12')
9.5.5 Bedrooms *should* contain attractive ceiling light and a wall-switched outlet.

9.6 **Family room**
9.6.1. *Shall* have wall to wall carpeting or hardwood floor with area rug.
9.6.2 There *should* be attractive lighting.

9.7. **Laundry Room**
9.7.1. Automatic washer and dryer with proper exterior venting *shall* be provided.
9.7.2. There *should* be adequate lighting and work space. 41
9.7.3. There *shall* be a utility sink.

9.8 **Window Treatments**
9.8.1 The church *shall* provide window treatments in every room (e.g. blinds, drapes, curtains)

9.9 **Other furnishing**
9.9.1 All other furnishings *shall* be the responsibility of the pastor and family.

10. PROVIDED UTILITIES

(listed utilities are in effect from either former guidelines or conference rulings since the former guidelines were approved)

Utilities *shall* be paid by the local church including heat, gas, electricity, fuel, water, water conditioning system and maintenance where needed, basic local telephone service (not including long-distance), sewage, and trash disposal. Church *shall* provide good television reception by cable, satellite or antenna. Church is responsible for costs associated with initial installation; pastor is responsible for monthly fees where applicable. In order to minimize fees and deposits, the utilities, including the telephone, shall be in the name of the local church or charge, unless this results in a higher business rate schedule.

11. MAINTENANCE:

11.1. Pastor and family may do maintenance when needed, but *shall not* be required to do it. Materials required for maintenance shall be provided by the church/charge.

11.2 Interior painting *should* be done when walls/trim become stained and cannot be restored by cleaning; or at the time of a change of appointment (upon consultation with the incoming pastor);

11.3 or at a minimum of once every five years.

11.3. **Carpet**

11.3.1 Padding and Installing: Carpets *should* be professionally laid and padding should be 5/8 or 7/16 inches thick. It is *recommended* that new carpet be laid in the spring or the fall.

11.3.2. Cleaning: Carpets *should* be cleaned as needed in the main living areas with a minimum of every two years. Church shall pay for the cleaning.

11.3.3 Replacement: For medium to high grade carpet, evaluation of wear *should* be made after 8 years in high traffic areas (living room, dining room, hallways), 10 years in lower traffic areas.

11.4. Discarded items or replaced appliances *shall* be removed from the parsonage or church property within three weeks after replacement.

11.5 Chimney examination and cleaning *shall* be done at least annually, especially in the case of fireplace or wood-burning stoves.

11.6. **Water**

11.6.1 Sewer and septic systems *shall* be examined and cleaned regularly.

11.6.2 Private water supplies *shall* be tested according to the US EPA recommendations.

11.7. **Major Renovations**

11.7.1 Major renovations *should* be done as quickly as possible and coordinated with the parsonage family schedule.

11.7.2. If major renovations are planned for a moving year, they *shall* be coordinated with both outgoing and incoming pastors to minimize the disruption to both families.

11.8. All smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers *shall* be checked annually, by the pastor, and by the church at a change of appointment.

11.9 **Vermin Control**

11.9.1. Foundation walls, attic eaves and soffit areas *shall* be secure to keep out rats, mice, bats, birds and squirrels.

11.9.2 Termite and other insects *shall* be controlled through certified annual inspections and treatment, where needed.

11.10 **Parsonage Record Book:**

The record book *shall* include an up-to-date listing of all appliances, window and floor coverings owned by the church. It *shall* include all warranties, guarantees, repair lists, and the instructions for the use of equipment belonging to the parsonage. The record *shall* indicate when and from whom purchased and whom to call for service. The record book *shall* also include records of improvements. A copy of the parsonage standards *shall* be included in the parsonage book. The record book *shall* be kept in the parsonage.

12. ONGOING MAINTENANCE:

12.1 The church *shall* budget annually, equal to 2 1/2% of the replacement value of the parsonage, for repairs, renovations, remodeling, or replacement as specified in the annual parsonage needs assessment.

12.1.1 A discretionary parsonage repair fund for the use of the pastoral family is *recommended* (a minimum of $500 is suggested.) Any surplus at the end of the fiscal year shall be kept in reserve to provide funds for future replacement of appliances.

12.2 Any major improvements which cost over 10% of the value of the parsonage *shall* comply with ¶2520 of the *2000 Discipline* or applicable sections of successive *Discipline*.

12.3 An escrow account *should* be maintained by the church for large repairs in the parsonage.

12.4 Insurance *should* be equal to 80 - 90 % of replacement value of the parsonage.

12.5 Renters Insurance to cover possessions of pastor's family *should* be maintained by the pastor.

13. NEEDS ASSESSMENT: (2000 Discipline, Par 2532.4)

The parsonage is to be mutually respected by the pastor's family as the property of the church and by the church as the private home of the pastor's family. An annual review *shall* be conducted by the Trustees or Parsonage Committee, PPR Chairperson, and the pastor/parsonage family by walking through the parsonage to discover needed repairs, improvements and decorations. Special attention *shall* be given to health and safety factors. The initiative *should* be assumed by the Trustees/Parsonage Committee or the pastor, since it is their joint responsibility to maintain the parsonage in good condition and will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon time. The parsonage, however, is the pastor's home and any assessment *shall* be scheduled in plenty of time to meet with the convenience of the family with the pastor being present. Needs reported by the pastor between the annual reviews *shall* be dealt with as the need arises. During the Needs Assessment, a copy of the Parsonage Standards and a list of improvements done over the past year *should* be available. A periodic "Open House" hosted by the parsonage family is a *recommended*, but optional, social gathering. ***This does not take the place of the Needs Assessment.***

14. MOVING

14.1 **Responsibilities of the outgoing parsonage family at the time of the move:**

14.1.1 Remove all personal property from the parsonage.

14.1.2 Leave the house clean, particularly appliances, closets, cabinets and bathrooms. ***Professional cleaning is recommended.***

14.1.3 Remove or arrange for removal of all trash and discarded items.

14.1.4 Collect all parsonage keys and give them to the incoming pastoral family. Be certain that all keys (church and parsonage) are clearly identified.

14.1.5 Leave notes on whom to call in case of emergency.

14.1.6 Leave notes on whom to call for service and repairs.

14.1.7 Sanitize the house for pet odors and smoking odors.

14.1.8 Leave the parsonage book where it is readily available.

14.2 **Responsibilities of church/charge at the time of a move:**

14.2.1 Wash curtains, dry clean drapes and window coverings or replace as needed, and wash all windows.

14.2.2 Have all carpets cleaned immediately following the incoming move. Treat hardwood floors as applicable.

14.2.3 Have all smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers checked and in proper working order.

14.2.4 Have all appliances in good repair and working order.

14.2.5 Have all faucets, drains, and drain closures in good working order.

14.2.6 Painting and repairs should be made in coordination with the incoming family's needs.

14.2.7 Parsonage should be cleaned between occupants to make the parsonage ready for the new pastor. ***Professional cleaning is recommended.***

14.2.8 It is the church's responsibility to see that the Cabinet Checklist (see 14.4.1) is completed.

14. 3 **Costs:**

14.3.1 The cost of professional moving, subject to limitations, *shall* be paid by the church or charge to which the pastor is moving. This cost will be assumed by the Conference in the case of Superintendents or other special conference appointments.

14.3.2 The Charge or Conference *shall* be responsible for paying the moving costs up to 16,000 pounds.

14.3.3 The pastor *shall* be responsible for paying the moving costs in excess of 16,000 pounds.

14.3.4 Professional packing, wardrobes and boxes furnished by the movers *shall* be the expense of the pastor.

14.3.5 When a pastor moves from outside the Conference, the charge *shall* only be responsible for that portion of the cost from the Conference boundary to the charge.

14.4 **Miscellaneous**

14.4.1 A moving checklist provided by the District Superintendent *shall* be completed and signed by the pastor and a representative of the church before moving.

14.4.2 For retired pastors and spouses, or surviving spouses of pastors who have died while in active pastoral service, the Annual Conference *shall* pay the moving expenses of one move.

15. PET CARE:

While it is the right of the parsonage family to have pets, it is also the responsibility of the pastor and his/her family to assume proper care for the maintenance of pets and property. With regards to the parsonage, this involves the following:
The pastor *shall*:

Provide proper care for pets as approved by humane society guidelines.

15.2. Assume the financial responsibility for and obtain the permission of local church as to the construction and maintenance of semi-permanent pet facilities, i.e. kennel, dog house, etc.

15.3. Dismantle and remove any facility constructed by the pastor/family upon his/her reappointment, unless permission is secured from the local church and incoming pastor as to its remaining intact.

15.4 Replace/repair damage done by the pets to the carpets, flooring, drapes, walls, doors, etc., and assume *all* associated financial costs.

15.5. Upon moving, the pastor/family must do a thorough job of cleaning areas where the pet(s) resided, including pest control (especially fleas).

15.6 It is *recommended* that pets be boarded or otherwise removed from the house prior to the move, so that hair and allergens can be eliminated.

15.7. Removal of pet damage and odor will be part of the inspection prior to a move. If the parsonage is not cleaned/deodorized to the satisfaction of the inspecting body, then the outgoing pastor will be liable for professional cleaning expenses.

COMPLIANCE

1. The Board of Trustees or Parsonage Committee of each local church *shall* make a written report at its Charge Conference, demonstrating either compliance with these standards or specific plans to come into compliance with these standards.
2. The District Superintendent, in consultation with the pastor, the Board of Trustees, and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, shall be responsible for ensuring that these standards are met.
3. If a church or charge chooses not to bring their parsonage into compliance with standards, the areas where they remain out of compliance will be reported at charge conference. This information will be communicated to a pastor being asked to accept an appointment to the charge. Compliance with the Parsonage Standards is an important part of the annual consultation process for pastoral appointments.
4. Lay member(s) of Annual Conference are responsible for taking these standards back to every local church or charge Board of Trustees.
5. Where compliance with standards requires the purchase or major modifications of the parsonage, it is expected that execution of such plans would begin within ten years of approval of standards by the Annual Conference.