

STANDARDS FOR PARSONAGES

Revised May 2025

BE IT RESOLVED that the following recommendation be adopted as the standards for parsonages for GNJUMC effective July 1, 2025.

STANDARDS FOR PARSONAGES

Responsible Group in the Church

The *Book of Discipline* does not mandate a parsonage committee; however, it is strongly recommended that each local church which has responsibility for a parsonage form a parsonage committee. The committee will follow-up to assure timely resolution of parsonage problems affecting the health and safety of the pastor and/or pastor's family (much like a landlord). The chairpersons of the S/PPRC, Board of Trustees and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to assure proper maintenance and up-keep. (¶1258.2 g(16) and ¶12532.4). As a part of that review, congregations are encouraged to have conversation about how the parsonage could become ADA compliant both inside and out, as well as discussing the current parsonage's appropriateness for the church at this time. The cost of housing, whether in the form of a parsonage or in the form of a housing allowance, shall not be determined on the basis of race, color, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, age, or disability.

Standards for Existing Parsonages

All parsonages shall meet local requirements for a Certificate of Occupancy, if any. It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees of the Local Church to be familiar with these requirements. If a church is unable to meet these requirements, they should be in contact with the District Superintendent as soon as possible.

Health and Safety Standards

1. Parsonages shall be supplied with effective HVAC systems. With the increased health issues due to climate change and related increased health issues, adequate cooling is an essential consideration. Specific health concerns shall be addressed with local congregations.
2. The septic or sewer system shall be fully functional and meet the needs of the parsonage family. Maintenance of septic systems is the responsibility of the church.
3. In parsonages where there is a well, the local church is responsible for testing of water on a periodic basis consistent with local health codes for rental properties.
4. The local church shall perform radon testing is to be done periodically consistent with E.P.A. standards and local requirements.
5. Parsonages shall be tested periodically for lead paint and asbestos. Abatement of these is the responsibility of the local church.
6. Drive and walkways shall be hard surfaced.
7. Minimally acceptable outside light for safety to illuminate walkways and driveways
8. One fire extinguisher in kitchen and one extinguisher outside of the furnace room. There shall be at least one extinguisher per floor level. All fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and Carbon Monoxide detectors are to be in compliance with local code requirements for rental properties and certificate of occupancy.
9. Parsonage electrical service shall conform to the current National Electrical Code.

Furnishings, Equipment and Services:

1. Living room and family room furniture.
2. Dining room furniture.
3. Kitchen appliances including stove, refrigerator with separate freezer compartment, exhaust fan, and dishwasher.
4. Furnishings for special rooms such as sun porch, den, etc. that may be different from one charge

to another.

5. Laundry equipment – automatic washer and dryer.
6. Standard television connection or equivalent such as streaming services (providing at least 30 channels/basic cable package), high speed internet service fast enough to support streaming where available, and one telephone line (cell or land line). As churches/parsonages are located in a variety of geographical areas, we encourage discussion at the local church level to provide comparable communication services and cost saving measures such as bundling of services.
7. Floor coverings (solid surfaces are preferred).
8. Functioning window shades and blinds, or curtains/drapes.
9. Closets or free-standing storage units in each bedroom.
10. Trash cans. In municipalities where garbage pickup is not part of the tax base and is billed to the parsonage, that local church is responsible to pay for this service.
11. Suitable equipment for lawn care and snow removal corresponding to the size and condition of lawns/driveways/walkways and/or appropriate lawn/plowing services.
12. A study for the pastor in either the parsonage or church building. Office furnishings shall include a desk, desk chair, minimally acceptable shelving for the pastor's library, additional chairs, and a locking filing cabinet.
13. Parking space for a minimum of one (1) car shall be provided.

Additional Suggestions

1. Electrical service to be inspected every five (5) years by a licensed electrician
2. Roof inspection every five (5) years
3. Energy audits every five (5) years

Responsibility

- a. **Each pastor is responsible for:**
 - a. Furnishings for as many bedrooms as the family needs
 - b. Personal items such as television, vacuum cleaner, small appliances, dishes, glassware, flatware, cleaning tools, wastebaskets, and decorative accessories
 - c. The following regular maintenance
 - Routine cleaning
 - Floor maintenance
 - Trash disposal and recycling
 - d. It is expected that the pastor shall provide tenant (renters) insurance to cover property loss and personal liability.
 - e. Restitution for any damage beyond normal wear and tear.
 - f. At the time of a move, the current pastor shall remove all personal items and furniture from the parsonage and property and shall leave the parsonage in a "broom clean" state. The cost for removal of furnishings and personal property not previously agreed upon with the church will be met by the pastor. Pastors are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces such as kitchen counters, appliances and cabinets, bathroom fixtures, and church owned furniture that has been used by the parsonage family during their time in the parsonage.
- b. **Each charge shall provide:**
 - g. Utilities – heat, electric, gas/oil, sewage, cable, internet and basic telephone, as well as any property taxes or HOA fees that are assessed to the parsonage.
 - h. Maintenance for all parsonage equipment
 - i. Basic furniture for all rooms except the bedrooms (see above)
 - j. Funds for the repair of the parsonage and its maintenance should be allocated and allowed to accumulate so that continuing care and major repairs can be made when needed.
 - k. At the time of a move, the church is responsible for cleaning and preparing the parsonage for the new pastor and her/his family. This includes washing or dry-cleaning curtains and drapes, cleaning window blinds, shampooing carpets and/or washing floor coverings, washing windows, cleaning disinfecting garbage cans, doorknobs, etc.

Congregations and pastors are expected to follow the guidelines of the state and the CDC with regard to effective and proper cleaning procedures of parsonages at the time of a pastoral change. The most updated information for cleaning and disinfection is available on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov>.

c. **Miscellaneous**

- a. The parsonage is the pastor's home for his/her tenure in that church or charge. S/he has, therefore, the responsibility to care for the home and its furnishings from damage by pets or people and, if it is damaged, to return the home to a condition equal to that when s/he received it to use. If an item of furniture is damaged beyond repair, s/he is obligated to replace it.
- b. The right of the pastor to own furniture and equipment cannot be challenged. However, if s/he does own furniture and goods that s/he wishes to use in the parsonage, and parsonage furnishings have to be stored, s/he should make every effort to store it properly so it is in good condition and does not suffer damage from being in storage. The site or method of storage for any church owned furniture shall be determined by mutual agreement between the pastor and the Board of Trustees. The pastor assumes financial responsibility for the storage of any unused furniture.
- c. The pastor's family shall be permitted to purchase an all-electronic vehicle (EV) or a plugin hybrid and charge it at the parsonage. The expense of the charger and any electrical improvements to the parsonage are the sole responsibility of the pastor's family. All improvements to the parsonage must be approved by the local church board of Trustees and must meet all applicable local codes. Before purchasing the said vehicle, the pastor's family and the appropriate committees in the church must negotiate how the increased electrical expenses will be handled.
- d. We recommend that in addition to the required written reports filed annually with the Church Conference paperwork, there be a complete video/photo inventory of all church-owned furnishings in the parsonage. The inventory and all videos and photos should be updated annually as needed.
- e. It is the responsibility of the Parsonage Committee to be acquainted with the parsonage and, after a new pastoral appointment is made, meet with the incoming parsonage family to discuss the minimum acceptability of housing and furnishings, and to meet annually thereafter with the parsonage family.
- f. At the time of a new pastoral appointment, the chairs of the S/PPRC and the Board of Trustees, the current pastor and the incoming pastor will walk through the parsonage together for inspection and planning. It is recommended to utilize the Church Conference parsonage inspection report as a guide.
- g. In order to respect the privacy of clergy and families, the church has a responsibility to make an appointment and secure the approval of the pastor or an adult member of the household prior to visiting the parsonage at any time.
- h. Given the great differences in housing costs throughout GNJ, a church and/or pastor who wishes to provide for a housing allowance rather than providing a parsonage must take into consideration comparable housing costs for that community to set an appropriate allowance that provides for the pastor and his/her family needs. Churches and pastors exploring this option must be in conversation with the District Superintendent at the very beginning of these considerations to understand the implications for future appointments, and the Disciplinary requirements for potential sale of an existing parsonage if applicable.

d. **Multiple Church Appointments and Clergy Couples**

- a. In appointments where a clergy person is appointed to more than one church and a parsonage is provide by one of the churches, the utility expenses (heat, water, and electric) will be divided equally between the churches. Any capital improvements and maintenance on the parsonage are the responsibility of the church that owns the parsonage.
- b. In cases of clergy couples when the couple resides in the parsonage of one of the appointments, the utility expenses will be divided equally between the appointments provided

that housing is considered as a part of the compensation package for each of the clergy. In situations where both persons in a clergy couple are utilizing their respective parsonages, each church will provide utilities for their own pastor.

e. Standards for Parsonages (Purchasing or Building a New Parsonage)

- i. All parsonages shall meet local requirements for a Certificate of Occupancy.
 - j. The District Committee on Church Location and Building must be consulted in developing plans for all purchases or construction of a new parsonage.
 - k. All newly constructed or newly purchased parsonages shall be in full compliance with the *Book of Discipline*. Consideration shall be made for those with handicapping conditions. *Provide on the ground-floor of a newly constructed parsonage: (1) one room that can be used as a bedroom by a person with a disability; (2) a fully accessible bathroom; and (3) fully accessible laundry facilities (§12544.4d)*
- Churches considering selling their current parsonage and purchasing a new one need to explore property tax implications as well as liens on the property that may need to be considered in potential financing.

Option 1

- a. The use of maintenance-free materials in building and in finishing and furnishing, thus contributing towards keeping maintenance costs lower.
- b. The following room requirements:
 - c. Living Room/Family Room
 - d. Dining Room
 - e. Kitchen
 - f. Study
 - g. Baths (2)
 - h. Bedrooms (3)
- i. A minimal electrical service of 200 amperes
- j. A garage of a size to accommodate 2 cars, plus room for storage of lawn mowers, bicycles, tools, garden equipment, ladders, paint supplies, etc.
- k. Space to store large articles of furniture/equipment
- l. The use of materials meeting the most energy efficient standards for insulation and windows
- m. Careful consideration should be given in choosing the location of the parsonage. This consideration might include the distance from the church, accessibility from main streets of the community and the church, the neighborhood and its future, and the community itself and its future growth.

Option 2

- a. The standards of Option One would apply with consideration by the church of purchasing, leasing, renting a townhouse or condominium. This option would be negotiated by the District Superintendent, the local charge and the pastor following consultation with the District Committee on Church Location and Building.
- b. The purpose of this option is to provide an alternative to the “traditional” church parsonage for ministry in special situations. Allowing for the wide variety of townhouse/condo choices, it is difficult to recommend a single standard for such settings.

Appeals

Appeals by the churches or pastors on any of the above provisions should be made to the District Superintendent who has the final authority to interpret and implement the foregoing standards.

Submitted by: Rev. Steve Bechtold, Chair of GNJ Commission on Equitable Compensation