



The Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Parsonage Guidelines

Approved by action of the Synod Council, October 30th, 2000 as a part of the Synod guidelines.

SYNOD PARSONAGE GUIDELINES

A parsonage is a home provided by the congregation for its pastors. It is to be an aid in the carrying out of ministry. In its care of the church, the congregation will want to provide a good home.

The guidelines on the following pages are a way to help both pastor and congregation. Following them will help the congregation become aware of needed improvements and let it know if a synod-wide standard has been achieved. It will be in a position to become aware of abuses of the parsonage property.

Since the parsonage is the pastor's home, privacy should be respected. Congregation members are expected to follow the same stands of politeness for such things as entering the parsonage as they would for any other home in the community.

Because it is the home of the pastor, the desires of the pastor should be consulted, as changes are necessary. Further details about this are in the following guidelines. The quality of the parsonage should meet a standard set by the homes of the majority of the congregation's members. The size should be adequate to accommodate families.

The tenant/landlord model may apply on occasion, but its application is quite limited. Contrary to renters, the pastor normally has little choice of residence. The relationship between the pastor and congregation is not based on a lease or rental agreement, but upon a common bond in the service of Christ Jesus.

The following items below list more specific guidelines:

Guidelines for Parsonages

These are the suggested guidelines for congregations with a parsonage. These are guidelines that congregations and pastors may use to discuss the maintenance, repair and responsibilities relative to a church owned home.

1. It is recommended that following appliances be provided in the parsonage:

- Stove
- Softwater System (if needed)
- Refrigerator
- Garbage disposal (optional)
- TV Antenna unless Cable or Satellite is provided
- Dishwasher
- Humidifier/Dehumidifier (if needed)
- Washer and Dryer
- Air Conditioning

2. It is recommended that the following utilities be paid directly by the congregation.

- Electricity
- Basic Telephone (except personal long distance calls)
- Gas
- Soft Water Service (if Needed)
- Cable TV (optional)

3. Items that would normally be supplied by the congregation include:

- Paint
- Window Coverings
- Light fixtures
- Wallpaper
- Floor coverings

Ceiling fans

4. When a pastor first moves into a parsonage, the congregation should see that it is thoroughly clean and should usually plan to redecorate.
5. The colors, fabric, design, etc, selected in the redecoration would normally be selected by who will be living in the house, in consultation with the appropriate committee. The congregation, of course, would determine the price ranges for these items.
6. Parsonage maintenance and repair should be listed as a separate line item in the annual budget, with a clear understanding of who has the authority to spend these budgeted funds.
7. There should be an annual inspection of the parsonage that is conducted with the pastor.
8. The pastor and congregation should develop and annually update a list of necessary and desired repairs, maintenance, modernization, redecorating and remodeling projects and together prioritize these projects.
9. There should be a clear understanding about how regular maintenance and emergency repairs are to be handled. It is suggested that the pastor be authorized to spend a specific dollar amount at his or her discretion. Any repairs in excess of this amount would require approval of the property committee or the congregation council.
10. When a pastor moves out of a parsonage, and before all financial obligations are completed, there should be an inspection of the property to see that it is left clean and in good repair. The pastor should be held responsible for any excess wear or damage caused to the parsonage while he or she was living there. This would include damage caused by children and pets.
11. The grounds around the parsonage are primarily the responsibility of the congregation. The congregation should see that the lawn, shrubbery and flowerbeds are in good condition when pastor moves into the parsonage. The pastor may be expected to care for these grounds (mow, rake, remove snow, apply fertilizer, insecticides, herbicides) or these responsibilities may be shared by the congregation. *(The division of labor should be negotiated by the pastor and the council immediately after the pastor's arrival).*
12. Congregations should consider taking care of the grounds around the parsonage while the pastor is on vacation or sabbatical (study leave), if it is decided that this is the pastor's responsibility.
13. The congregation should provide suitable garage space for the pastor's automobile(s). Normally, this would be space for two vehicles

Policy added by action of 2003 Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Assembly:
Resolution # 7:

"RESOLUTION CONCERNING PERSONAL SPACE AND CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY"

WHEREAS in the past many or most congregations were the landlords of pastors through the ownership of "parsonages" and

WHEREAS it was often expected that meetings of various types would take place in said parsonages, and

WHEREAS it has, in the past, also been expected that pastors would accommodate pastoral counseling in their homes, especially congregationally owned homes and

WHEREAS pastors are being discouraged, more and more, from doing pastoral counseling, especially in places other than church offices with high visibility, and

WHEREAS all people, including pastors, have rights and needs to protect their personal space and the sanctity of their homes, even homes owned by the congregation,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America affirm the rights of home and personal space for its clergy by strongly discouraging the expectation, or requirement, that parsonages be used for church programmatic use, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these recommendations be communicated to the congregations of this synod through a letter addressed to the congregational councils of all its congregations.

Submitted by

The Mount Spokane Cluster

Resolution Passed (A0306.33) as amended (A0306.34)

2003 Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Assembly - June 21, 2003