

Section 18

PARSONAGES PREPARING FOR A NEW MINISTRY

Introduction

Parsonages are primarily a residence provided by a parish for the private use of a Presbyter and their family during the duration of the ministry within a parish. It needs to satisfy the requirements that any of us might have in a modern home.

There are generally accepted guidelines that should be followed when considering the provision of a parsonage dwelling and its furnishings. However, specific situations may result in variances from the standard being appropriate, e.g. a single person in a four-bedroom plus study house could be considered unsuitable.

National statistics indicate that the average New Zealand household changes residence every five and a half years; therefore, with the current trend for ministries being around seven years, it is not unreasonable to consider the possibility of buying and selling or renting for individual situations.

What are the Matters to be Considered When Buying or Building a Parsonage?

The parsonage will have to be home for various families and individuals; it is best that it be of a straightforward, good design. The house should serve as a supportive background to the lives of those within.

Location\Neighbourhood

Within the community and the parish, proximity to schools, shops, etc. Consideration needs to be given to the future re-marketable potential in the event of the parish subsequently wishing to dispose of the house.

Orientation

To the sun, view, garden, etc.

Presentation to the Street

Does it fit the neighbourhood scene?

Public and Private Aspects

Are there private sitting-out areas?

Are there any security implications, e.g. lighting, safety for children? Are there smoke alarms fitted?

Access

The expectation that the parsonage should be a focus of parish life is now not so prevalent. It is important to respect the private life of the parsonage family. To this end, the entry area to the study should be separate from the living area of the house, obvious and easy to find.

Adequacy, Size, Number, and Inter Relationship of Rooms

Are the living areas capable of supporting up to two groups simultaneously (family and meeting or counselling if appropriate)?

Can guests be accommodated (34 bedrooms)?

Are storage facilities and built-in wardrobes suitable?

Is there a degree of separation of washing facilities, i.e. separate W.C., shower, bathroom? Are the kitchen/living areas sunny and pleasant?

What form and size of study is required? (This may be affected by the proximity of the church office. However, it must not be assumed that every Presbyterian will be happy with the same working arrangements. Flexibility is desirable.)

Is there appropriate garaging (preferably double)?

Adequacy of Property for the Disabled

Concern has been expressed about the suitability of certain types of houses as parsonages. It is preferable for the parsonage to be single-storey, but if this is not possible, at least one double bedroom with adequate bathroom and toilet facilities should be on the ground floor, together with the living areas.

If there was a change of ministry in your parish, would the parsonage be able to meet the needs of a disabled person?

- a. within the house – bedrooms
 - living rooms?
- b. access to the section and community facilities?
 - Ease of maintenance – Applies to both house and section.
 - Age of the building – Is there evidence of asbestos, and have any tests been carried out? An asbestos plan is to accompany all applications.
 - Town planning requirements that relate to the purchase or building of the house.
 - Flooding, drainage and elevation.
 - Access to house and garaging.
 - Soundness of construction.

Land Claims

This should be considered when the Land Story is being prepared as part of the process undertaken when an application for permission to purchase is being prepared for submission to Synod Property Advisory Committee and Methodist Connexional Property Committee.

Insurance

The parish is responsible for insuring the parsonage building and the contents which are provided by the parish, e.g. floor coverings, drapes, curtains, light fittings, etc.

When a Parish is Considering Building a Parsonage, What steps should be taken?

Prior to considering the site, or appointment of an architect etc., it is essential that the parish consider its total strategy for the future needs of the parish. This should preferably be undertaken in association with the Synod Property Advisory Committee. Subject to obtaining the prior consent of the Synod, the plans can be prepared by a member of the Master Builders' Association, however, the Methodist Connexional Property Committee strongly encourages the use of an

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architect. The architect/designer will ensure compliance with the Building Act 1993 and can oversee the building project.

What is the Position Regarding Parsonage Furnishings?

Within the Methodist Church, the Presbyter/Deacon is responsible for providing most of the furnishings of the parsonage. The following furnishings remain the responsibility of the parish, circuit or division to provide in the parsonage:

- All rooms should have floor coverings of a neutral tone and design, drapes and curtains, and suitable light fittings. Kitchens, laundries, bathrooms and toilets should have suitable, serviceable flooring in sound and sanitary condition.
- The lounge, dining room and study should all have an efficient source of heating.
- The kitchen should be well-planned, with plenty of bench space, cupboards and power outlets. It should have a reliable and efficient stove. A dishwasher is becoming a standard fitting.
- An efficient hot water supply.
- The laundry must contain appropriate taps and waste for an automatic washing machine, together with at least one tub and adequate cupboards.
- At least two telephones should be installed and be interchangeable between jack points in the main bedroom and study living area. Appropriate connections for computers and the internet are required.
- The study should be equipped with a large desk with drawers and a comfortable office chair. At least 40 metres of book shelving (preferably with variable spacing or shelves) and at least 3 cubic metres of shelved cupboards should be provided. A metal filing cabinet (while not essential) is advisable as it provides continuous filing of ongoing records irrespective of changes in ministry. At least two comfortable chairs should be provided for visitors' use.
- Appropriate jack points/plugs are required to enable the safe connection of computers, printers etc.
- The Presbyter is responsible for arranging insurance coverage for their own possessions in the same way as any other member of the community.

Presbyter's Rights and Responsibilities?

Rights	Responsibilities
To treat the place as their own home.	To promptly advise the Parish Property Committee of any maintenance requirements as the need arises.
To be free to have whom they wish to enter the property.	To care for the property by keeping it in a good and tenable condition and to accept responsibility for any repairs resulting from damage caused by self or the family.
To have privacy within the property for them, their family and guests.	To encourage/permit representatives of the Parish Property Committee to inspect the property periodically to ensure that maintenance needs are being actioned.
To expect repairs and maintenance to be attended to promptly.	To permit the District Property Advisory Committee to review at least every three years the adequacy of all accommodation provided. (Law Book 2.24.6)

Rights	Responsibilities
Where a Minister dies, the spouse/partner shall be entitled to continue rent-free occupancy of the house for three months after the death of the Minister. Any other arrangements applying prior to the death shall continue during the three-month period. (Law Book 2.24.3)	

Parish's Rights and Responsibilities?

Rights	Responsibilities
To have the house and grounds treated with respect and cared for in a responsible manner.	To provide a residence of a good standard that meets the requirements as determined by Conference.
To have access to the property, after giving reasonable notice, to determine any maintenance needs.	To maintain the property, with regular attention to painting, paper hanging and provided furnishings.
To be informed promptly of maintenance requirements.	To insure the building and provided contents.
To regularly (annually) inspect the property to determine required maintenance and upgrading.	To regularly (annually) inspect the property to determine required maintenance and upgrading.
To have support from the Synod Property Advisory Committee when dealing with property matters relating to the parsonage.	To consult with the Synod Property Advisory Committee when dealing with all appropriate property matters.
To have inspections from the Synod Property Advisory Committee members three-yearly and prior to any change of Ministry within the parish, and advice regarding any maintenance etc., that needs attention.	To respect the privacy of the ministerial family.
	To have parsonage and grounds clean, inviting and well maintained for incoming Presbyters when a change of ministry is taking effect.
	To consult, where possible, with the new Presbyter with regard to any major refurbishment etc.
	To seek the support of the Synod Property Advisory Committee and obtain the approval of the Methodist Connexional Property Committee before building, buying, selling, or making any structural alterations to the parsonage.

District Property Advisory Committee Rights and Responsibilities

Rights	Responsibilities
To expect early consultation by parishes on any matters relating to the sale, purchase or alteration of parsonages. To be available to assist and advise parishes on any matter relating to the sale, purchase or alteration of a parsonage.	To be available to assist and advise parishes on any matter relating to the sale, purchase or alteration of a parsonage.
To inspect the parsonage, after negotiations with the presbyter and the parish, at least three-yearly and especially just prior to any change of ministry.	To ensure that the parsonage is of adequate standard to meet the needs of the Presbyter and family.
To initiate annual reviews of the adequacy of all accommodation provided, whether occupied by a minister or not.	To initiate reviews at least every three years of the adequacy of all accommodation provided, whether occupied by a minister or not and to initiate appropriate action as required. (Law Book 2.24.6)
To be advised of the action taken as a result of recommendations made to parishes.	

General

When a Change of Ministry Takes Place, From What Date Should the Change of Occupancy of the Parsonage Take Effect?

A new ministry becomes effective from 1 February. It is generally recognised that while the date when possession of the parsonage is given is subject to negotiation between the parish and the Presbyters concerned, it should be available during the third week of January. The last Sunday in January should usually be treated as the Sunday which is free to enable the family to settle into their new environment. The Induction should usually be held during the first week of February, with ministerial responsibilities being effective from the first or second Sunday in February, as appropriate.

Can the Parish Rent Accommodation for the Presbyter?

A parish may choose to rent accommodation for the Presbyter and their family. The parish would be responsible for the payment of rent. It is the normal custom for the parish to own the parsonage.

Are Presbyters Obligated to Live In Parish Provided Accommodation?

Subject to the satisfaction of certain provisions, they may live in other accommodations.

The Presbyter should apply to the Synod Superintendent for permission to live in other accommodations. The Synod Superintendent must be satisfied that availability for stationing and ministerial effectiveness will not be diminished by the Minister residing in other accommodation (Law Book 2:24.4.1). "Where permission is granted, and the Minister is living in accommodation at the Minister's expense a housing allowance as from time to time determined by Conference shall be paid to such Minister" (Law Book 2:22.4.2).

If a Presbyter decides to purchase their own home and the parsonage is sold, the proceeds of the sale must be deposited in the Methodist Trust Association or the Church Building and Loan Fund and retained for later replacement of ministerial housing.

If the parsonage is let, the rental received by the parish may be used to help meet the housing allowance that is payable to the Presbyter, as outlined below.

What are the Financial Implications to the Parish of a Presbyter Living in Their Own Home?

In 2008, Conference adopted provisions that allow parishes and boards to rent the Presbyter's own home to meet the requirement to provide suitable accommodation for full-time presbyters.

Service Tenancy Agreement

The Service Tenancy Agreement is a legal requirement of the Residential Tenancies Act and must be completed and signed by the Presbyter and the parish. A copy of the Agreement can be found in Appendix 2 at the back of this handbook.