

***What have our former clergy experienced around life in the parsonage? What concerns related to home life do they have with the various proposals?***

“Two things:

- 1) it's not good for the pastor to live in a house that many or most of the congregation could not afford.
- 2) it is important to remember that a parsonage is a pastor's home... even though it is owned by the church, it should not have an “open door” to the congregation...”

“I also think that converting the parsonage to two condos is not a comfortable idea...”

“I'm sure I am not alone in questioning some of the suggestions that the parsonage be used for multiple activities. It is reasonable to expect there could be some activity considering the place of the parsonage on the harbor. However, to make larger use of it to justify still owning it is a little suspect. At least from the perspective of most clergy I know. The idea to vacate the parsonage during tourist season in order to raise funds is not fair to the clergy occupants. Creating a rental apartment is likewise so. There are many demands on the time and energy of the clergy. They need protected space to relax and recuperate. Clergy already give up a lot of privacy.”

“It was great to be able to walk to the meetinghouse or down town when I was there but I would not put a high value on such proximity. Sometimes there is a benefit in living away from the church to avoid unexpected interruptions.”

“I remember having many conversations over the years ... about the nature of the “place” and its impact upon our Spiritual well being. We could set on the front porch with a cup of coffee or a cold beer and feel the weight of leadership melt away; or how watching the coming and going of the boats was somehow a balm for the soul. It is truly a magical place! I could go on and on about the nature of this place, and I think I will. There are so many memories which we shared with many of you. Those wonderful 4<sup>th</sup> of July picnics and fireworks. The after Christmas St. Stephen's Day parties. The youth group cook outs and swim parties. Yes, they are all memories which we still cherish, but I'm thinking that is not what you are looking for from me.”

“I don't think the neighbors will go for a two family in that part of the world.”

“Over our tenure in the parsonage it seemed that the issue of selling or keeping raised its head at least annually, which always raised the question of should we start packing. I suppose that this is always the case when you live in someone else's property.”

“The pastoral needs will be as varied, as people are varied. Some pastors will love having a parsonage (especially in this location), and others will choose to own their own home. In that case, housing allowance should be provided; especially in this place where housing is so expensive.”

“The settled pastor could be all over the map, in terms of “boundaries” for life at the parsonage. I was always happy to host TFC-related events in or on the lawn of the parsonage, but would probably not go for public events, like concerts or outside weddings.”

“I would definitely not like to have people living above me, in a home that has been offered to me as parsonage (the upstairs condo idea). I would be happy to host congregational events in the parsonage or on the lawn.”

“There is something to be said (again, for me, personally), to have a place to call home near to the Meeting House. It [living in the parsonage] made it easy to do weddings (of which there are many), funerals, etc. And many of the people a pastor visits are not far away. I liked spending time in the Parish House office, as people would regularly stop by to chat. I feel this would not happen as much, without a nearby parsonage. This is just nostalgic, but my favorite time of the week was walking from the parsonage to the church on a Sunday morning, and hearing the choir practice, putting my things in the pulpit, and smiling up to all of you.”

“Whether a congregation provides a parsonage or housing allowance for their pastor, this is intended to provide a "home space" for the pastor and family. Like any person and family, a pastor needs a place to go at the end of the workday and a place to be on days off that is free from the demands, expectations, and energy drain of work. Home should be, for the pastor as for any of us, a place of renewal, recharge, restoration, and sanctuary from the work of ministry. Home should be the family's sacred space, whether the building that houses it is owned by the congregation, the pastoral family, or someone else.”

“I feel very strongly that any proposal that involves the disruption of the pastor and family's home is a non-starter. Whether that involves the expectation they will move out for a portion of the year or share their space with other occupants or any church programming, this prevents them from having any respite from the work of ministry. Any such scenario will mean the pastoral family literally "lives at church." That is not a healthy expectation or boundary for us to place on our pastor and family. Thank you for the opportunity to share my pastoral perspective on the parsonage.”

“Although the parsonage is owned by the church, it was our family’s “home”.... it’s where all the everyday ups and downs of family life take place, and it was not always convenient to have the church “in our business” so to speak.... I fear that so many of the plans to keep the parsonage have lost sight of the fact that their “beloved parsonage” is somebody else’s home, and it may not always be convenient to host bible studies, youth group events, weddings (God forbid!!) on your side lawn, etc. when someone in the family is having a meltdown or being a typical Preacher’s Kid, or being a spouse adjusting to island living.... pastors’ families are no different from any others!! We may put on a good show for the congregation, but the struggles are all there, just like everyone else. My question to some of these folks would be, “how would you feel if you were expected to “host” all these events and goings on at the whim of an outside (not family) group of people?”.

“Being asked to move out for the summer so the parsonage could be rented would be a definite deal breaker for me.... and having a parade of renters moving in and out of the upstairs all summer long would also be a deal breaker!! Basically, I think that the church members should not look at the pastor and family as tenants who are living at their whim. The “public” parsonage becomes a “private home” when the keys are handed to the new pastor. The expectation on the private (dare I say “sacred”?) family space should be limited to an annual inspection (for maintenance purposes) and fully agreed upon in advance events such as Easter Sunrise and July 4th. Hosting bible studies, youth events, etc. should not be an expectation, but should be at the discretion of the pastor.”

***What insights and questions have our former clergy offered regarding parsonage proposals?***

“Is the island growth, if there is any, largely the retired? What of services to them? Not all congregations have a bell curve distribution of ages. While serving all ages, what might be the strongest focus? The young? Families who serve the island as tradesmen, teachers, police, firemen? The retired elderly? If service to the retired, what a good chance this would be to challenge all those latent years of experience and talent to make a difference in the life and health of the island. What a chance to enrich the lives of those who see retirement as the last stage of life and challenge them instead to stay involved in their community”

“Large mention is made of programs that would attract and hold youth as members of the church, if not simply to serve the wider needs of young people on the island. I wonder what the demographics of the island going forward suggest. Is there a population growth of young families whose children will need to be served?”

“The money! All of us would like to be able to hold onto the parsonage and still do all the other things we need to do. The meetinghouse will need constant attention simply because of age. A carefully chosen parsonage that won’t involve constant repairs is important. The funds available from a sale makes this possible. Peter Boak’s circumstances are different, but when Peter retires (I hope never and that he lives to 104) will the congregation be able to attract a strong replacement without housing or housing allowance? Most church staff are underpaid. Some plan to change this could be afforded in the sale of the parsonage. Most clergy would prefer not to live in a parsonage. To that end many congregations have offered assistance to help their clergy buy their own homes. This would also likely mean a yearly housing allowance.”

“The opportunities for service, which carefully invest funds would provide, would help TFC be the outreaching community it wants to be. I’m sure as you read this you are thinking of island needs. I feel it would not be in the spirit of the Christ for us to worry more about our feelings of nostalgia and needs than the needs of our community and the world we are called to serve. What an opportunity the sale of the parsonage might be for the congregation. TFC can be known more for what it does than what it owns.”

“One final reaction. Someone has suggested Community Preservation Grants to help with the needs of then parsonage. I’ve always been a strong church vs. state proponent. I thinking such funds begins to blur that distinction.”

“I don't think the church can afford to keep the parsonage in the long haul. I did enough personal work on it to know that what it really needs is to be jacked uped and a new, poured foundation with a full basement to really be worth sinking money into, especially a two family!”

“Sell it now while the prices are off the charts. Bank the money. Give the minister a housing allowance until you get a deal on a much smaller parsonage in walking distance to the church--even if it is a mile walk. Once all this covid is over I think you will have a bunch of houses for sale by people who panicked and moved to the vineyard to be safe. I like the van and the youth minister idea very much.”

“My immediate reaction to the question to sell or not to sell is DON'T SELL! Know matter what the cost! Save the Mayhew Parsonage! It is obvious when reading the proposals, whether you were in favor of keeping or selling, most of you acknowledge the historical significance of the property. For almost 200 years this property has been historically linked to the Federated Church and its predecessor the Congregational Church of Martha's Vineyard. And, for the past 60 or 70 years, it has been the residence of the church's ministers.

I think that many people believe that the Mayhew property is just that, a piece of real estate with a tremendous dollar value. I happen to believe that it is much, much more than real estate. There is a Spiritual nature to this place. I'm sure that Thomas Mayhew felt it when he selected this location on South Water Street to be his home, and the Mayhew sisters certainly felt it at the end of their lives when they made the decision to bequeath the property to the church to use as the home of the clergy who would serve the church for years to come. I'm also sure they could never have foreseen what would happen to property values on this small island.

The current generation will no doubt always associate the Mayhew property to the Federated Church, but if the property is sold, that will not always be the case. Future generations of church members will not remember the picnics, Easter egg hunts and other social gatherings which took place on the parsonage lawn or inside the Manse itself. Once sold the property will be lost to the church for good. Please, do not sell the Mayhew Parsonage! It has been and will continue to be a blessing to members and friends for generations to come. A place of quiet solitude where your pastors will find refreshment for their souls.

Now, having said that, the truth is that I am also a realist, and that selling the parsonage seems to be the solution to your current situation. Selling this multi-million dollar property would provide the income to purchase a new parsonage without the baggage of almost 200 years of wear and tear, it would clear up any outstanding debt, provide the needed funding for future parsonage repairs, and give the church reserves for future ministry projects. I guess that kind of sums it up.”

“Several proposals spoke to maximizing these opportunities: youth events, gathering events, special services (including youth-focused). I do think these have merit. I know that the youth event we had last year, with the most participants, was the one held on my back lawn, with kayaking, paddle boarding and pizza. It was extremely well-attended, with some younger youth coming. The parsonage/lawn is a great asset for this.”

“So...to get to the “selling” idea...It will certainly bring in needed \$.

We could certainly buy a parsonage, more out of town, for a lot less.

I do worry a lot about a few things, should that be the direction.

- there are a lot of divisive feelings over this. In my opinion, the ones

who wish to hold onto the parsonage will be more likely to leave the church, than those who want to sell, should the vote go that way.

- What will the future giving look like, when members feel we have tons of money, so why should they give any more? Yes, the sale will sustain us for awhile, for not forever; plus giving is not just about \$; it is about commitment to a place and a mission.
- I think, should we sell, there have to be extremely clear guidelines as to how the endowment will be set up and its restrictions. There will have to be a clear policy for this.”

“Finally, I find it interesting that some of the “younger” members of the congregation wish to hold onto the parsonage; mostly for hoping that new things can come of it. I had expected it to be the older, long-term members who would be in favor. “

“I fear that some look at the parsonage as “bait” to lure a pastor to the call... any pastor ...who would accept the call because of the parsonage and its location is not the person you’re looking for!!”

“As I believe one of your former pastors said, wouldn’t it be wonderful if The Federated Church was known for all the good they do on the Island, rather than for the pricey real estate they own!! There is so much good that could be done by selling the parsonage... there are plenty of suitable, less costly homes (love the idea of calling the new parsonage “The Sarah Joy Mayhew Parsonage”) that your pastor could be housed in, paying off debt and establishing an endowment fund, and most importantly, providing mission and outreach to the Island residents!! Your actions, not your possessions will be the draw for new members!”