



# United Methodist Endorsing Agency

General Board of Higher Education & Ministry Division of Ordained Ministry

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## GUIDANCE FOR BISHOPS, CABINETS, CHAPLAINS, and CONGREGATIONS in case of MOBILIZATION/DEPLOYMENT

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA), General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), maintains endorsement for approximately 400 United Methodist pastors for military chaplaincy.

Since September 11, 2001, we have been challenged by the increased number and length of deployments of National Guard, Reserve, and active duty chaplains. Mobilization for

active duty and deployment are ranging anywhere from 90 days to 18 or more months for many chaplains. Deployment can create a number of challenges, including appointments and reappointments, family and emotional issues, legal and pension issues, along with reintegration issues for families and churches due to post-traumatic stress from combat or prolonged separation.

### CABINETS and SPR or PPR COMMITTEES

#### Does mobilization change a pastor's relationship with the annual conference?

*This is where communication and collaboration are so critical due to the constant changes in law and length of deployments.*

Mobilization DOES NOT change the active relationship of the pastor/chaplain to the annual conference. In an extended mobilization, the chaplain moves to an extension ministry appointment under the endorsement of the United Methodist Endorsing Agency, Division of Ordained Ministry, (¶ 344.1b, *2008 Book of Discipline*). Neither leave of absence nor sabbatical are legitimate options. It is requested that Boards of

Ordained Ministry, grant probationary time credit to chaplains who are in the probationary phase while mobilized and deployed.

**Note: chaplains on probationary status cannot volunteer for deployment, mobilization or active duty; however, if the chaplain has completed the basic chaplain course, they could be involuntarily mobilized and/or deployed.**

#### How long may a chaplain be mobilized?

At the present time, depending on the military branch of service or unit assigned, chaplains are being mobilized and deployed in various lengths of time; some for 90 days, others for 18 months or more. In the current

environment, it is expected that many will be called for a year or more. However, a chaplain may be released from active duty prior to the stated mobilization order.

**Remember to keep everyone informed!**

#### What happens to the chaplain's church, appointment, family, housing, pension, and insurance, when mobilized?

*Here are the significant issues you will need to read carefully! Maintain updated legal information from Certified Public Accountants, General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, and the IRS.*

The Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), a federal law, [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov), provides employees called to military duty in the uniformed services with a variety of rights, including job restoration rights and continuation of certain benefits during military duty. Clergy are generally excluded; however, provisions of the USERRA should

be taken into consideration by the church.

If a pastor/mobilized chaplain must be absent from the pulpit, the chaplain is responsible to work with the (S/P) PRC in relation to pulpit supply. This is a consultative process. The pastor/chaplain must share with the (S/P)PRC, bishop and DS. The possibility of mobilization and have a plan prepared for such an eventuality.

## Does pastoral supply become the responsibility of the Cabinet should an extended mobilization occur?

If it appears that the mobilization may be long term, it may be appropriate to assign a new permanent pastor. The chaplain, of course, remains within the itinerant system and has the assurance of appropriate appointment upon return to the annual conference. A parish may be willing to keep its pulpit available for the mobilized pastor. This should be negotiable, but should not be seen as a right by either the charge or the chaplain.

### Recommended guidelines in the event of mobilization:

#### For 1-89 days

No change in appointment is recommended unless it is already a part of the appointment process. Housing arrangements and rental agreements are made.

#### For 90-179 days

An appointment change may be in order. Housing arrangements and rental agreements are made.

#### More than 180 days

An appointment change is likely to occur, but is determined by the projected length of the deployment and the appointment process. Housing arrangements and rental agreements are made.

## Should the family be allowed to live in the parsonage?

In mobilizations of 179 days or less the option to remain in the parsonage should be given to the family. While on active duty, the chaplain will be paid a government housing allowance. The chaplain and the

church should negotiate how to use these funds in paying rent, housing allowances, or use of the parsonage. Advice from a certified public accountant or the IRS should be obtained concerning the tax status of these arrangements.

## What about health insurance benefits for mobilization of more than 30 days?

There will be a delay of approximately 30 days for the chaplain's family members to be incorporated into the military medical system (TRICARE). For this reason, it is important that family members have copies of the military member's orders activating him or her to active duty and a family member identification card. Family resource groups and rear detachments can assist families with the process.

When persons return from active duty status they can re-enter their conference insurance program under the HIPPA rules that guarantee insurance coverage if they can provide the certificate from TRICARE to show that they were covered during the period described. Care should be taken in this matter. Sometimes the transition into TRICARE is not immediate. Some clergy families may have members who are not insurable under TRICARE.

## What about pension benefits?

The General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits includes in each of its plans a provision titled, The Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA), which entitles clergy/employees, who satisfy certain requirements to some benefits during qualified military leaves.

To qualify for the protection provided under USERRA, the person must satisfy certain requirements that may include providing notice to the employer of the absence for qualified military service and returning to work after completion of military service. Generally, the

covered individual is treated as though the chaplain did not incur a break in service.

Plan sponsors who receive notice of the required military service should determine whether or not the clergy/employee meets the requirements for protection under USERRA and should notify the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits so that it can administer the plan(s) accordingly.

**For more information on the USERRA requirements, contact your legal counsel.**

## How are questions about chaplain duty resolved?

Matters related to guard/reserve duty are a part of the consultative process and should be negotiable without the need for strict legalisms. The duties of the (S/P)PRC are clearly defined in the *Book of Discipline* in reference to pulpit supply, housing, salary, benefits, etc. The (S/P)PRC is the primary point for any negotiation. (§247.18, 2008 *Book of Discipline*)

**The needs of the congregation must be primary in reference to any extended mobilization. No congregation needs to feel obligated to provide ongoing compensation for a pastor who is mobilized and receiving pay and allowances from the state or federal government; nor should any pastor or clergy family experience undue hardship because of an involuntary mobilization.**

**For additional information and guidance see the following:**

USERRA, [www.dol.gov/elaws/userra.htm](http://www.dol.gov/elaws/userra.htm),

The state Employer Support Guard and Reserve (ESGR), personnel for guidance on the regulations regarding involuntary mobilizations, [www.esgr.org](http://www.esgr.org),

The General Council on Finance and Administration, [www.gcfa.org](http://www.gcfa.org).

## What kind of support does the chaplain and family need during pre and post deployments and reintegration?

It is especially critical that the church, conference, and the United Methodist Endorsing Agency work together ensure that the family makes the transition in a caring climate. The greatest gift to offer mobilized chaplains is to assure that their family is well cared for in their

community. This involves support, contact, and assurance that needs are addressed in a timely and effective way. When the chaplains return, it is important that the new appointment is comparable to what they left, if possible; and that their families' move is supported.

## CHAPLAINS/CLERGY

### Military chaplaincy is challenging, demanding, and uncertain.

Ministry to service members and their families in today's war environment is requiring more and more chaplains to leave their local church or garrison. Chaplains enter the battlefield where they listen to the

grief, fear, hopes, and dreams of those warriors who are called to fight. Chaplains go where the service members go when service members go.

### United Methodist Chaplains are needed in the National Guard, Reserve, and active components of military services.

There is a new generation, millennials, serving in today's military. They have a unique religious and spiritual approach to life and are hungry for spiritual leadership and pastoral care that is relevant and theologically sound.

United Methodists, by tradition and training, are some of the most effective shepherds for these service members and wounded warriors seeking the holy in the midst of chaos.

### Chaplain or Pastor . . . What is the difference?

Both are spiritual care providers and ministers but in different settings with different constituents and communities. The chaplain, ordained and endorsed by the church, provides or performs ministry to groups of

service members and families of many different religious beliefs or no beliefs at all. Pastors have their congregational setting and denominational framework. Both are conference connected.

### If I am an Elder or serving a local church or extension ministry setting, how can I serve as a military chaplain?

You must have approval from your district superintendent and bishop to request endorsement for National Guard, Reserve or active duty service. UMEA is a division of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and conducts interviews in Nashville, Tenn. in January, April, and August for endorsement for

chaplaincy settings.

The UMEA website is [www.gbhem.org/chaplains](http://www.gbhem.org/chaplains) and e-mail is [umea@gbhem.org](mailto:umea@gbhem.org). (See other resources listed below.) Bishops Marcus Matthews (Philadelphia area) and Charles Crutchfield (Arkansas) co-chair the Endorsing Committee.

## SUGGESTED WAYS TO CARE AT EACH STAGE OF MOBILIZATION/DEPLOYMENT

### Before Mobilization/Deployment

The time prior to a guard/reserve chaplain's deployment is filled with high anxiety. Chaplains have to secure their business affairs, deal with the time the chaplain must be away from family, and be concerned about the needs of their church. Military chaplains endure a haze of uncertainty trying to carry on effective

ministry while preparing for certain departure and unknown future responsibilities. They need assistance and encouragement. Everyone needs to work toward reducing conflict and friction. Cooperation between all persons will support the pastor as the transition is made from civilian to military ministry.

## During Mobilization/Deployment

When the day of deployment has arrived and the chaplain has met the mobilization requirements they are technically prepared or cleared to leave. Then the chaplain must deal with the emotional readiness. Fear, restrictions in movement, attitudes of parishioners, geographical locations, living conditions, departing from loved ones, interruptions in the local church ministry, and numerous other factors create changes in the chaplain. Some chaplains may witness the horrible affects of war. Whatever they experience will become part of their

## After Mobilization/Deployment

Regardless of the mission and duration of leave, the guard/reserve chaplain does not return as the same person. Those who experience combat are especially impacted by the trauma they witness. Each chaplain will be a counselor for persons who face death on the battlefield or of their relatives, if they become divorced, or undergo some type of financial or family crisis. The volume of these matters intensifies during mobilization and the chaplain's spiritual, emotional and physical limits are often stretched. The chaplain is the primary caregiver and provider of religious services and pastoral care, counseling, religious services, and command staff work.

Then, one day, it is time to come home and they bring all of these events, either as growth knowledge or as harmful contaminates. Some will come home to family

personalities; each one will be altered, in positive or negative ways, by the experiences they live through.

Any contact from ecclesiastical leaders, colleagues, and local church members will be beneficial in the chaplain's emotional well being. A prayer support group and a support group for the family are excellent ways of communicating care. In short, every chaplain needs a minister and this is an excellent time for the denomination to provide this supportive assistance.

systems that have changed; the children and spouse may be more independent than before. They may return to joyous celebrations or face divorce. The domestic environment is changed and the parish may be changed as well.

Bishops, cabinets, and local churches need to develop alternate approaches based on each chaplain's needs. Some will need counseling; others will need an extended time to reunite with the family. Others will return to work within a short period of time. Whatever approach is selected, the post-mobilization period is a time for the chaplain to receive recognition for worthy ministerial service to the men and women of the armed forces, to receive the support and the encouragement of the chaplain's annual conference, and to be welcomed back.

## Retreats and Conferences for Pre- and Post-Deployment and Reintegration Issues.

UMEA, military units and many conferences provide retreats and conferences for families that have been affected by mobilizations and deployments to address the issues of separations and post traumatic stress. It

is imperative that families and service members take advantage of these. Information is available through the web page or contact UMEA; [umea@gbhem.org](mailto:umea@gbhem.org) or 615-340-7411.

## Chaplains are called to carry out the Wesleyan traditions of service!

### RESOURCES:

Air Guard Chaplain's Office: 703-607-5279  
Air Force Reserve Chaplain's Office: 800-223-1784  
Army National Guard Chaplain's Office: 703-607-7072  
Army Reserve Chaplain's Office 800-325-4914  
Marine Reserve Chaplain's Office 703-614-1457

Navy Reserve Chaplain's Office: 504-678-1052  
UMEA: 615-340-7411  
ESRG: 800-336-4590  
USERRA: 866-487-2365  
TRICARE: 888-363-5433

### United Methodist Chaplain's Checklist

#### *At the time of your appointment*

- Discuss with the district superintendent and the (S/P)PRC the matters relating to health and pension benefits.
- Discuss with the district superintendent and the (S/P)PRC possible housing arrangements for your family should you be mobilized.
- Describe to the district superintendent and the

(S/P)PRC what you do as a chaplain and how this might affect your appointment.

- Give them a copy of the "Guidance for Bishops, Cabinets, Chaplains, and Congregations in case of Mobilization/Deployment".

#### *As soon as you are notified of your mobilization*

- Contact your D.S., PPRC, and UMEA

*The United Methodist Endorsing Agency will make every effort to ensure that the military chaplains currently endorsed are informed and current on the requirements for a strong connection with bishops and conferences.*