



United Methodist Endorsing Agency

General Board of Higher Education & Ministry | Division of Ordained Ministry

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Relationships, Resources, and Responsibilities of the United Methodist Church and its Endorsed Community

Our Shared Charter

God sends the church beyond its walls to love and serve a broken and fallen world. Clergy endorsed and appointed to extension ministries and appointments beyond the local church provide one element of that ministry. The ministry of endorsed clergy is a gift of the church to the world in the name of Jesus Christ, partially fulfilling God's promise to the spiritual heirs of Abraham and Sarah, "... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:3

Endorsed clergy serve in settings such as the military, correctional institutions, health-care settings, retirement communities, children's homes, counseling centers, workplace ministries, and other specialized ministries of pastoral care. Ecclesiastical endorsement affirms that a person is qualified and authorized to perform the full range of ministry required in these pluralistic settings. The church has a special responsibility of trust to ensure that clergy serving among vulnerable populations outside the church are called, gifted, trained, competent and worthy of confidence.

The United Methodist Book of Discipline identifies the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), through the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA), as the sole body authorized to provide endorsement on behalf of the United Methodist Church. Clergy within the United Methodist connection may only be endorsed by UMEA.

Licensed local pastors, associate members, full and provisional deacons and full and provisional elders are all eligible for endorsement, although most federal settings are limited to elders. The endorsing agency does not revisit matters examined by annual conferences under their authority to license, commission and ordain clergy. All clergy certified by their bishops to meet the eligibility requirements are considered for endorsement.

Endorsement also signifies the bishop's willingness to appoint the endorsee to the requested setting. All United Methodist clergy, regardless of appointment, serve under ecclesiastical supervision throughout their active ministry. Therefore, it is vital for endorsed clergy to maintain a close working relationship with their bishops and district superintendents, beginning early in the process of exploration and continuing throughout the endorsed person's tenure in the endorsed setting.

Administration

Superintending Before Endorsement

Clergy desiring endorsement for ministry in a specialized setting should consult with their bishops and district superintendents prior to beginning the endorsement process. This consultation empowers the church to maintain connectional order and accountability and, simultaneously, helps clarify, evaluate and discern the clergyperson's call to ministry beyond the church walls.

Superintendents should encourage clergy and candidates for ministry who are considering service outside the local church to contact UMEA as soon they express an interest. This conversation will help the applicant understand when endorsement is required or beneficial, how the endorsement process works, what is required to succeed in the chosen setting and how endorsees are expected to maintain their endorsement. UMEA wants to educate prospective endorsees early in the process so that they can make informed decision all along the way. It is extremely frustrating for everyone involved when clergy invest their time, effort and money in training that won't help them achieve their professional goals or fail to accomplish the tasks that will.

UMEA formally seeks input from bishops and district superintendents during the endorsement process and will not grant endorsement without it. These recommendations are essential to assessing an applicant's readiness for the requested ministry. Therefore, it is crucial that bishops and superintendents know the applicant well-enough to provide an informed recommendation. This is another reason why applicants must consult with their conference leadership well before beginning their applications for endorsement.

Superintending After Endorsement

The church's responsibility to endorsed clergy does not end with endorsement. First and foremost, the church should maintain regular contact with it endorsed ministers. The *Book of Discipline* (§344.2.a) requires clergy in extension ministries to submit an annual report on the official form developed for the church by the General Council on Finance and Administration. The annual conference should annually publish its reporting requirements and timetable. Those who receive these reports should acknowledge them in a pastoral manner that supports and encourages endorsed clergy in their ministries.

The annual report, however, should not be the only communications that take place between superintendents and the extension ministries under their supervision. "All clergy in extension ministries are amenable to the annual conference of which they are members and insofar as possible should maintain close working relationship with and effective participation in the work of their annual conference, assuming whatever responsibilities they are qualified and requested to assume." (§344.2.a)

The "close working relationship" implies an ongoing connection in which the bishop and superintendent have significant responsibilities. Endorsed clergy should be included in the regular communications between the district office and the clergy of the district. Superintendents should correspond with their endorsed clergy individually, remember personal and family details as they do for their parish pastors, and respond to crisis events as they do for those appointed to pastoral charges.

Paragraph §344.2.b outlines other annual conference responsibilities, including meeting annually with clergy in extension ministries and visiting their appointment settings. (See below)

Endorsed clergy are an asset to the church beyond the work that they perform in their endorsed settings. They can help provide sacramental ministry in the district's churches, educate churches about ministry beyond the church walls and assist the church with understanding the unique needs of their constituents in specialized settings. Their expertise is valuable at every level from the congregation-in-mission to annual conference boards and committees.

To help ensure this vital resource remains connected to the greater church, those responsible for superintending are encouraged to ask the question:

- Who, what, where and how are endorsed clergy serving in the district/conference I am responsible for?
- How are they experiencing a connection to the church?
- How am I facilitating this connection?
- How can I implement a plan of engagement?

Endorsement and Categories of Appointment

Elders, associate members and local pastors are appointed to extension ministries in one of four categories of appointment (§344.1)

- A. Within the connectional structures of the United Methodist Church
- B. Endorsed by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
- C. Serving under the General Board of Global Ministries
- D. Others approved by the Bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry

Clergy approved for endorsement and appointed to the settings for which they are endorsed should be listed under category B. Those approved for endorsement but serving in an extension ministry setting different than the one for which they have been endorsed should be listed in category A, C or D as appropriate. Endorsement is only effective when clergy are serving in the setting for which they have been approved.

When non-endorsed clergy request an appointment to a setting for which endorsement is appropriate, boards of ordained ministry should consider whether endorsement should be required. Endorsement validates the work as a true extension of the ministry of Jesus Christ. The *Discipline* provides for endorsement for those who are appointed to provide pastoral care in health-care settings, children's homes, retirement homes, workplaces, counseling centers and the military.

Charge Conference Relationships

Endorsed elders and local pastors appointed to extension ministries are required to establish membership in a charge conference in their home annual conference in consultation with the pastor-in-charge and with approval of the district superintendent and the bishop. (§344.3a)

Similarly, clergy appointed to extension ministries outside of the bounds of their home annual conference are required to notify the bishop where they reside and affiliate with a charge conference where they work or live, again in consultation with the parties involved. (§344.3b)

The *Discipline* (§344.3a) requires all elders in full connection, including those in extension ministries, to be available to administer the sacraments in the district where the appointment is held, upon the request of the district superintendent.

Deacons serving beyond the local church will also maintain a charge conference relationship with a local congregation. Where the appointment is in another Episcopal area, the appointment will be made in consultation between the two bishops. Deacons are accountable to the pastor-in-charge and the charge conference of that congregation (§331.4, 5).

While levels of congregational involvement will vary from person to person based on the requirements of their institutional role, endorsed clergy are expected to be active participants in the life of a United Methodist church. Endorsed clergy need the same opportunities for worship, healing, growth, fellowship, support and service that the local congregation affords all Christians.

Representation in the Annual Conference

It is vital that conference leaders understand the unique circumstances, gifts and needs that characterize service in a non-church setting. Many conference boards of ordained ministry have established a committee or identified a liaison to focus on extension ministries. It's also valuable for clergy in extension ministries to be represented on conference boards and committees related to their work, especially the Board of Ordained Ministry and the District Committee on Ministry.

The Annual Report

Annual reports are required from each person in an appointment to an extension ministry (§344.3a) or appointment beyond the local church (§331.4d). The *Discipline* specifies that this report be submitted “on the official form developed for the Church by the General Council on Finance and Administration for use by the annual conference” These forms are available on both the GCFA and GBHEM websites. These reports are important because they interpret the clergy person’s ministry to the church and the annual conference.

This form asks for basic information about the clergy person’s appointment. In addition, the report should include:

- a brief narrative of ministerial activities for the year
- a list of continuing education received
- a copy of the evaluation received in the setting

Those serving as chaplains in the military reserve or as volunteer chaplains may not be required to submit an annual report to the annual conference since they are appointed full-time elsewhere. In these cases, chaplains should still provide a narrative summary of their ministry, including copies of any annual evaluation they received.

Please note that the annual conference does not forward a copy of the annual report to UMEA. Each endorsed constituent is responsible for providing UMEA with a copy of their annual report. Copies emailed to umea@gbhem.org are preferred. The UMEA staff reviews and responds to each report. The reports are also filed and used for reference when making future endorsement decisions.

Annual Conference Attendance

The Book of Discipline is clear that attendance at annual conference is required of all conference members. If attendance is not possible for a legitimate reason, it is the clergy person’s responsibility to request permission from the annual conference secretary or bishop to be absent. Requests should be submitted in writing and in advance.

Annual Endorsement Verification by UMEA

UMEA annually verifies to bishops and boards of ordained ministry the names of clergy under its endorsement and requests their reappointment (§1421.5.h). UMEA requests that annual conferences provide feedback in cases where clergy members have changed status and failed to inform the endorsing agency.

The Annual Meeting with the Bishop

The Book of Discipline calls for an annual meeting between the bishop and those in an appointment to extension ministry, “. . . to gain understanding of one another's role and function in ministry; to report to other ordained ministers appointed to extension ministries and to discuss with them matters concerning the overall approach to ministry in the episcopal area; to interpret the role and function of extension ministries to the larger church through the offices of the bishop and his or her representatives; to nurture the development of various ministries as significant in assisting the mission of the Church; and to discuss specific programs and services that the bishop and his or her representatives may initiate, in which the various ordained ministers serving in appointments beyond the local church may be qualified as consultants and supervisors. . . .” (§344.2b)

The Annual Visit to the Extension Ministry Setting

The Book of Discipline requires that all bishops “. . . provide for an annual visit to the ministry setting of all persons under appointment in extension ministries assigned within the geographical bounds of the annual conference and shall provide a report of the visit to the bishop of persons from other annual conferences.” (§344.2b)

This mandatory visit, ordered by the 1988 General Conference, provides a remarkable opportunity for endorsed clergy to showcase their institutions and ministries, helping the annual conference understand the vital nature of the ministries performed by those in endorsed extension ministries.

Continuing Education

Continuing education is required for all United Methodist clergy, with each annual conference establishing its own standards. It is an individual's responsibility to meet or exceed the annual conference's continuing education requirements.

Continuing educational opportunities are available through annual conferences, approved United Methodist seminaries, professional pastoral care associations, the UMC Cyber Campus and other providers. See GBHEM's Lifelong Learning website for more suggestions.

- <https://www.umccybercampus.com/>
- <https://www.gbhem.org/education/clergy-lifelong-learning>

Endorsed clergy can also earn continuing education units by attending UMEA-sponsored education events.

Special Considerations for Military Reserve or National Guard Chaplains

UMEA has published a separate mobilization handbook with requirements and guidelines for the bishops, superintendents and congregations of reserve component chaplains. This reference is available on the GBHEM website under chaplain resources.

Change of Endorsement Status

When endorsees are no longer appointed to the settings for which they have been endorsed, their endorsement becomes inactive. To reactivate a dormant endorsement, those previously approved must receive UMEA's approval.

Endorsed clergy in good standing in another denomination who transfer into the United Methodist Church under the provisions of ¶347 may be eligible for recognition of their previous endorsement when the transfer is complete.

For endorsed clergy transferring out of the United Methodist Church to another denomination, UMEA will coordinate with the gaining endorser to provide, whenever possible, a seamless transition to the new endorsement.

When endorsees voluntarily or involuntarily lose their clergy credentials in the United Methodist Church, their endorsement is terminated.

Withdrawal of Endorsement

Violations of the high standards of professional conduct expected of endorsees may lead to the suspension or permanent loss endorsement. When UMEA receives an accusation against an endorsee, the staff will consult with the endorsee's bishop and the bishop overseeing endorsement for GBHEM. Endorsement may be withdrawn in accordance with the policies and procedures established by GBHEM.

Withdrawal of endorsement will be reported to the relevant employers and board certifying agencies. Accusations of criminal conduct will also be reported to law enforcement.

In cases where UMEA suspends or revokes endorsement, the accused may appeal to the Endorsing Committee. Appeals are to be submitted in writing and appellants will appear before the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Endorsing Committee at their own expense.

UMEA does not withdraw military endorsements for the convenience of the endorsee to avoid deployments, reassignments or other lawful military orders. Endorsees wishing to leave military service should follow standard service procedures for release from active duty, unqualified resignation or retirement.

Changes of Job, Address, or Annual Conference Status

In addition to notifying their conference officials, clergy approved for endorsement should notify UMEA by email at umea@gbhem.org whenever there is a change in address, phone number, email, job or annual conference status.

Clergy should notify their district superintendents as soon as they anticipate a loss or change of employment in the endorsed setting and discuss the way forward. When there is a loss of employment, the annual conference will need to place full, provisional and associate members on transitional leave until a new appointment can be found. Transitional leave between appointments may be granted for up to 12 months prior to accepting a new appointment, a voluntary leave of absence or medical leave (as appropriate).

Retirement

Retirement from the annual conference and retirement from the institutional setting of are separate events.

When endorsed clergy retire from their settings but have not yet retired from their conference, they will require a new status with the annual conference. Transitional leave between appointments may be granted for up to 12 months prior to accepting a new appointment, a voluntary leave of absence or medical leave (as appropriate). Clergy should notify their district superintendents of their need to change status earlier rather than later, especially in cases where they are seeking a new appointment within the conference.

When an endorsed person retires from the annual conference, endorsement normally ends. When clergy wish to maintain their endorsement in retirement because they intend to keep working in a regular full or part-time capacity, their bishops will need to agree to appoint them to the approved setting in retirement. Previously endorsed clergy who wish to work on an occasional or irregular basis in the setting for which they were approved, or who simply wish to maintain their board certifications, may receive evidence of endorsement without being actively appointed. Retirees must contact UMEA to reactivate their endorsements when required.

Chaplain Pension Grant Fund

A pension fund was established to provide grants in cases where an endorsed chaplain or pastoral counselor is not eligible for other pension coverage, not including Social Security. Credit may be granted for up to 7 years in which a person was a) endorsed for the setting in which they served; b) appointed by the bishop to the setting; and c) not entitled to any pension benefits provided by an employer (either defined benefit plans or employer contributions to a defined contribution plan). The grant is not funded by apportionments and receipt of the grant is not an entitlement. The pension rate and policies are set annually by GBHEM based on the economic health of the fund. For further information contact Wespeth.

Professional Standards

Position of Trust

Endorseees will never use the power of the position entrusted to them to violate the personhood of another human being, religiously, financially, emotionally or sexually. They use their office only for the good of the people under their care.

Pluralism

Clergy endorsed by UMEA work almost entirely in pluralistic environments. While remaining faithful to the United Methodist Church, its teachings and its practices, UMEA expects endorseees to provide spiritual care to everyone within their areas of responsibility with same level of commitment that they provide to their coreligionists. UMEA also expects all endorseees to work collegially with clergy from other religious bodies to better meet the needs of all constituents. If in a supervisory position, endorseees will respect the practices and beliefs of the clergy they supervise.

Sexual Misconduct

The United Methodist Church requires all clergy to be faithful in marriage and celibate in singleness. While any breach of this standard is unacceptable, involvement with a constituent or counselee violates a sacred trust placed in the whole church and cannot be tolerated. Likewise, there is no tolerance for sexual assault, abuse, harassment or discrimination. Every report of sexual misconduct will be presented to the appropriate authorities (ecclesiastical and/or civil) for investigation and may result in the immediate suspension of endorsement.

UMEA expects all endorsed to receive regular periodic training in sexual harassment awareness and prevention, to exhibit exemplary behavior in their own conduct and to exercise all their authority and influence to create a safe environment for all.

Confidentiality

“All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences.” (§341.5) This standard may place the chaplain or counselor at variance with the laws of the state or the rules and regulations of the institutions in which ministry is performed. Endorsees who find themselves in a conflict between the church’s requirements and those of the state are advised to seek the counsel of their ecclesiastical supervisors, including their district superintendents and UMEA. In addition, they may need to seek competent legal advice.

Endorsees who intend to operate out of any other standard are responsible for alerting their counselees to that fact prior to the sharing of any trust.

Bearing and Use of Arms

Endorsed clergy will not wear, carry, train with or use firearms in the conduct of their ministerial responsibilities, either officially or unofficially.

Baptism

United Methodists baptize both infants and adults. Endorsed clergy are expected to provide for the sacramental needs of their United Methodist constituents, as well as other paedobaptist Christians. Endorsees should understand and apply the United Methodist theology of baptism expressed in the *Book of Discipline* and *By Water and the Spirit*, the church’s official statement of the nature of baptism.

Clergy are required to instruct candidates or their parents before baptism concerning the significance of the sacrament and the responsibilities it entails. Endorsed clergy may defer or deny baptism when the individuals involved, after having received adequate pre-baptismal instruction, do not understand or accept the nature of the sacrament or have no intention of fulfilling their baptismal vows.

It is permissible for a United Methodist endorsee to conduct a prayerful act of dedication or thanksgiving for the birth of a child to support constituents from traditions that do not practice infant baptism. Celebrants must take care to distinguish such an act from the sacrament of baptism, so as not to confuse the two.

Pastoral Acts

Endorsees will report to UMEA all baptisms, professions of faith and acts of receiving people into church membership to be included in the general membership roll of the church. A copy of the standard Pastoral Act Form may be requested from umea@gbhem.org. UMEA does not maintain a record of weddings or other pastoral acts that endorsees may perform.

Professional Competency

To demonstrate competency and grow professionally, endorsees should establish a relationship with a professional association appropriate for their settings and, where applicable, pursue board certification in a timely manner after endorsement. Recognized certifying bodies are identified on the GBHEM website under chaplain resources.

The Endorsing Agency

Advocacy

UMEA serves as an advocate for clergy under endorsement, both within the church and within the institutional systems in which they serve. It does this for all as it engages the church and the world on the organizational level, but it also does it for individuals as they find themselves caught in systems that don't understand the role of endorsed clergy.

Assistance

As helping professionals, endorsees understand that there are times that circumstances overwhelm all the resources immediately available to people in distress. This applies to pastoral care providers, as well. If endorsees need advice, information, resources, referrals or just a listening ear when dealing with matters in their own lives, UMEA is ready and willing to help.

Visitation

UMEA meets with many of its endorsed constituents at the annual meetings of professional associations related to endorsement. UMEA also conducts regional visitation within the United States and, for military chaplains, overseas. Endorsed clergy working in the living in the area are invited to participate.

Education

UMEA provides continuing education opportunities to its endorsed constituents at regional training events held throughout the country. Participants are fully responsible for the cost of travel. Other costs are partially subsidized by UMEA.

Transition

UMEA conducts an annual transition workshop for endorsees nearing retirement and their spouses. The workshop covers a range of topics, ranging from finances and medical care to ecclesiastical relationships to the psychological and spiritual aspects of life transitions. UMEA covers travel and lodging in addition to workshop expenses.

Information

Additional information and educational materials are available on the UMEA website:
<https://www.ghem.org/chapalains>.

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