



United Methodist Endorsing Agency

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

www.gbhem.org/chaplains • umea@gbhem.org • (615) 340-7411

Endorsement Guide

What Is Endorsement?

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

Bishops may appoint United Methodist clergy to 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.

Institutions which certify and employ chaplains or spiritual care providers often require evidence of endorsement as a condition of employment or certification. Governmental agencies, corporations, professional associations and other secular institutions are not qualified to judge the religious qualifications of those they employ as spiritual care providers. Instead, they look to church bodies and other religious institutions to identify those rooted in their traditions, professionally qualified and ecclesiastically authorized to provide ministry in specialized settings.

The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* identifies the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, through the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA), as the sole body authorized to provide endorsement on behalf of the United Methodist Church. UMEA, then, serves as a bridge between the annual conference and institutions which employ or certify United Methodist clergy.

Different settings require different categories of ministry. Please call the endorsing agency if you have questions about which clergy categories might serve in which settings.

Endorsement and the Connection

The United Methodist Church is a connectional system. The General Conference sets standards for licensing and ordination through the *Book of Discipline*. Annual conferences apply those standards as they call, assess and set apart United Methodists to serve as clergy for the church. As a part of that process, the annual conference verifies the educational, moral, legal, financial and psychological readiness of candidates, in addition to assessing their gifts and calling for ordained or licensed ministry. UMEA does not repeat these tasks during the endorsement process.

UMEA, rather, assesses applicants for endorsement on their readiness for service in the requested setting as representatives of the church, and their willingness to pursue the training and certification required to become recognized experts in their field. Every endorsed chaplain is expected to comply with the accepted standards of ethical ministry and practice in their fields of service.

Endorsed elders and local pastors are appointed under the provisions of paragraph 344.1.b of the *Book of Discipline*. Endorsed deacons are appointed under paragraph 331.4.b.

Endorsed clergy remain connected and accountable to both their annual conferences and UMEA throughout their ministries, living out the covenants of their baptism and ordination in specialized settings. They are also responsible to their employers and to the professional associations which certify them. Think of endorsed ministry, then, as a four-way partnership that includes the clergyperson, the church, the employer and the specialized profession to which the endorsed person is called.

What Do I need to Know about Endorsement?

Endorsement alone does not guarantee employment or appointment, and endorsement alone is not usually sufficient to gain employment. Many employers have other requirements, including completion of Clinical Pastoral Education or other professional training, state licensing or board certification. Endorsed clergy are responsible for finding their own employment, and for coordinating their appointments with their annual conferences.

Endorsement is granted for a specific setting. Should you wish to change settings, we will review your request. Approval is not automatic and may be conditional. Additionally, when you no longer serve in your endorsed setting, your endorsement is withdrawn. Your endorsement is only active while you are employed or seeking employment in your setting.

Endorsement may also be withdrawn for cause, in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the Board of Directors elected by General Conference. Every endorsed chaplain is expected to comply with the accepted standards of ethical ministry and practice in their fields of service. Should you must wish to change settings, we will review your request. Approval is not automatic and may be conditional.

Civilian Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care

Clergy may be endorsed for settings that include:

- Healthcare Chaplain (Hospital, Hospice, Residential Health Care, Veterans Health)
- Prison Chaplain
- Law Enforcement, Fire or Emergency Services Chaplain
- Workplace Chaplain
- Retirement Community Chaplain
- Children's Home Chaplain
- Campus Minister or School Chaplain
- Therapeutic Counselor (Pastoral Counselor, Mental Health Therapist, Marriage and Family Therapist, Substance Abuse Counselor)
- Clinical Pastoral Education Certified Educator
- Life Coach or Spiritual Director
- Other Specialized Ministries of Professional Pastoral Care

Different settings require different forms of preparation, credentialing and certification. Please call the endorsing agency if you have questions about a what a setting requires.

Endorsement for self-employed settings will require the establishment of an oversight board with ecclesiastical, professional, financial and legal expertise represented on the board. Contact the endorsing agency for more information.

Professional Association and Board Certification

Standards for endorsement include establishing a relationship with and pursuing board certification by the appropriate national professional pastoral care organization. Among those habitually recognized are:

- American Association for Marriage and Therapy (AAMFT), www.aamft.org
- American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), www.aapc.org
- American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA), www.correctionalchaplains.org
- Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), www.acpe.edu
- Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), www.professionalchaplains.org
- College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP), www.pastoralreport.com
- Federation of Fire Chaplains (FFC), www.firechaplains.org
- Fellowship of United Methodist Spiritual Directors & Retreat Leaders (FUMSDRL), fumsdrl.org
- International Coach Federation (ICF) coachfederation.org
- International Conference of Police Chaplains (ICPC), www.icpc4cops.org
- Military Chaplains Association (MCA), www.mca-usa.org
- National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplaincy (NIBIC), www.nibic.com
- National Association of Veterans Affairs Chaplains (NAVAC), www.navac.net
- Spiritual Directors International (SDI), www.sdiworld.org

Where board certification is required, endorsements are considered provisional until you achieve certification. You will be required to report your progress toward certification annually.

In situations not covered by recognized certifying agencies, UMEA will set minimum standards which may include specialized training for the type of ministry for which endorsement is sought. Requirements may include at least one year of supervised clinical training or comparable professional experience.

Military Chaplaincy

To meet basic requirements for initial appointment (active duty or reserve) you must:

- Meet height, weight and age requirements.
- Be a citizen or a legal permanent resident of the United States and be eligible for a security clearance.
- Be physically qualified for military service based on an examination by the military medical system.
- Meet other requirements, as determined by the military departments.

To learn more about military chaplaincy, always speak directly to a chaplain recruiter. Only chaplain recruiters have the expertise to guide you correctly.

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency is a member of the **National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces** (NCMAF) (www.ncmaf.net).

Requirements for Ecclesiastical Endorsement

1. Clergy member of an annual conference of the United Methodist Church in one of the following categories: full or provisional elder; full or provisional deacon; associate member or licensed local pastor.
 - Endorsement for service with the military is limited to elders.
2. Approval by your bishop to serve in the requested setting.
 - Licensed local pastors and provisional members will require the approval of their bishops for endorsement to settings that will take them out of their own annual conferences.
 - Deacons requiring sacramental authority for their requested settings must secure it from their bishops prior to endorsement.
3. Professional training and willingness to pursue board certification appropriate for the setting.
4. Completion of an application and interview with UMEA.
5. Approval by the endorsing committee.

The Endorsement Process

Apply online at <https://methodist.smapply.io>. Register for an account and complete the application for endorsement. There is a \$50 application fee to be paid by credit card during stage two of the application. You will need to provide:

- Basic information about you, your clergy status, your education and background
- A recent photograph
- A short life history describing how God brought you to this point in your ministry
- A brief description of your understanding of ministry in the requested setting
- Two personal references and their contact information
- Contact information for your bishop and district superintendent

When all your materials have been received – including reference reports – UMEA will schedule an interview with you. We are currently conducting interviews remotely by means of the Zoom conferencing app. Applications must be fully complete – including references received – before we can schedule your interview.

The Interview

Your interview panel will consist of a panel of two or three experienced chaplains or pastoral counselors. Whenever possible, at least one member of the committee will represent the setting for which you seek endorsement. You will be notified of the recommendation at the time of your interview. Areas to be examined during your interview include:

- Spiritual maturity, moral and emotional stability
- Self-awareness
- Motivation for endorsement
- Understanding of ministry and competencies required in the endorsed setting
- Understanding of the nature of the institution you wish to serve
- Ability to work cooperatively in pluralistic settings and teams
- Ability to maintain your United Methodist identity and connection
- Willingness to obtain education, experience, and certification as they apply
- Sense of humor
- Ability to keep life, work and family in balance
- Resilience, self-care and the existence of a personal supportive network

The Endorsing Committee

Following the interview, the application moves to the Endorsing Committee. The Endorsing Committee has the authority to grant or deny ecclesiastical endorsement. The committee is composed of members elected by General Conference and chaired by a bishop.

Once you are endorsed, a copy of your endorsement will be sent to your bishop and your district superintendent. You will receive a copy for your files.

Provisional endorsement may be granted if you successfully complete the endorsing process but lack the required professional certification or are a provisional member of the annual conference. Such endorsement will include specific requirements to be fulfilled before full endorsement can be issued. Provisional endorsement is valid for one year. Extensions may be granted annually when requested.

If you disagree with the decision of the Endorsing Committee, you may appeal the decision either in person or in writing within 90 days of notification of the committee decision. You must, however, pay your own expenses for a personal appearance.

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency

Division of Ordained Ministry / General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

P.O. Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203-0007

Phone: 615-340-7411

E-mail: umea@gbhem.org

Website: <https://www.gbhem.org/chaplains>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/umc.umea/>

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