



United Methodist Endorsing Agency

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

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Connectional Roles, Relationships and Responsibilities in the United Methodist Church Related to Endorsement

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 extend the ministry of the church to 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, with military chaplaincy being 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

Endorsement Policy

UMEA's approved policies and procedures related to endorsement are published in the *Endorsement Policy Handbook* on the GBHEM website. This publication supplements that authoritative reference.

Superintending Clergy Seeking Appointment to Specialized Settings

Clergy desiring to serve in specialized settings should consult with their bishops and district superintendents prior to requesting appointment or beginning the endorsement process. This consultation empowers the church to maintain connectional order and accountability and, simultaneously, helps clarify, evaluate, and discern the clergy person'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 will not 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 Clergy Appointed to Specialized Settings

The church's responsibility to clergy in extension ministries does not end with endorsement or appointment. First and foremost, the church should maintain regular contact with its clergy in extension ministries. 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 clergy 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. Clergy appointed to extension ministries 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:

- Who are serving in extension ministries and what do I know about the nature of their ministries?
- How are they experiencing a connection to the church?
- How can I facilitate this connection? How can I implement a plan of engagement?

Endorsement, Extension Ministries 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 connexional 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 in effect 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.

GHBEM provides guidelines for the Board of Ordained Ministry to use when considering requests for Category D appointments. These guidelines are available in chapter 14 of the [Board of Ordained Ministry Handbook](#).

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 is 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

The *Discipline* does not require those serving as chaplains in the military reserve or as volunteer chaplains 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.

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.

Changes of Job, Address, 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).

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.

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 be granted *emeritus* status by UMEA and receive evidence of endorsement without being actively appointed. Retirees must contact UMEA to maintain 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 Wespath.

Additional Resources

Additional resources related to endorsement are available on the GBHEM website:
<https://www.gbhem.org/clergy/chaplains-pastoral-counselors/chaplain-resources/>

Frequently Asked Questions are addressed at:
<https://www.gbhem.org/clergy/chaplains-pastoral-counselors/chaplains-pastoral-faqs/>