



## **ENDORSEMENT POLICY HANDBOOK**

### **The United Methodist Church**

Approved by the Board of Directors, April 2026

All *Discipline* references refer to the 2020/2024 *Book of Discipline*

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## **SECTION 1 – FOUNDATIONS**

### **DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITY**

The 2020/2024 *Book of Discipline* (§1406.11) grants the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) the authority to grant and remove endorsement for ministry settings that require it. GBHEM's Endorsing Committee, working through the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA) (§1406.10) as the executive agent, grants or removes endorsements and related ecclesiastical approvals in accordance with the policies and procedures established below.

### **THE MEANING of ECCLESIASTICAL ENDORSEMENT**

Ecclesiastical endorsement is an official, written certification document stating that an ordained or licensed minister is qualified and authorized to provide ministry and spiritual care in a pluralistic and specialized setting as a representative of The United Methodist Church within United States based employers. Endorsement signifies a "general" minister has become a specialized one (i.e. a "chaplain").

GBHEM provides endorsement on behalf of the United Methodist Church (§1406.11) for chaplains and other ministries of pastoral care in settings such as the military, healthcare, prisons, children's



homes, retirement homes, workplaces and counseling centers.

To those outside the church, endorsement signifies that a person is spiritually rooted, ecclesiastically accountable, pastorally proficient, able to work collegially in a pluralistic environment and committed to providing appropriate spiritual care for all eligible constituents.

Within the church, endorsement affirms a person is eligible to be appointed to an extension ministry under the provisions of ¶344.1.b of the *Book of Discipline*.

GBHEM endorsement affirms that individuals:

1. Are ordained, commissioned or licensed as clergy in The United Methodist Church.
2. Are in good standing with their annual conferences.
3. Are approved by their bishops to serve in the endorsed setting.
4. Have demonstrated evidence of God's call and provision for the specialized ministry.
5. Have demonstrated personal characteristics suitable for the endorsed setting.
6. Have completed specialized professional preparation appropriate for the endorsed setting.
7. Are appointed or seeking an appointment in the endorsed setting.
8. Have committed to maintain accountability with The United Methodist Church.
9. Are performing a valid ministry of the church.

### **THE MEANING of ECCLESIASTICAL APPROVAL for VOLUNTEER CHAPLAINS**

Clergy serving as volunteer chaplains may need to document the church's approval of their service.

Approval signifies that:

1. The chaplain is ecclesiastically qualified and authorized to perform as a member of the clergy in the approved setting.
2. The chaplain understands the nature of service in the approved setting and has committed to receiving the training appropriate for the type of ministry performed.
3. The district superintendent has consented to allow the chaplain to serve in a volunteer capacity.

### **THE MEANING of ECCLESIASTICAL APPROVAL for MILITARY CHAPLAIN CANDIDATES**

UMEA provides ecclesiastical approval for United Methodist seminary students to participate in the Military Chaplain Candidate program. The Army, Navy and Air Force each offer qualified seminary students the opportunity to be commissioned as military officers and participate in chaplain learning experiences.

Military chaplain candidates do not serve as chaplains. The program is designed to provide training and experience for those exploring a call to future military chaplaincy, either on active duty or with the reserve components.

Approval for the program does not serve as an endorsement for active duty or reserve component chaplaincy. Future endorsement as a chaplain is not guaranteed. Military chaplain candidates must complete the full endorsement process when they become eligible to be considered for endorsement as a military chaplain.



## **SETTINGS FOR ENDORSEMENT or APPROVAL**

UMEA provides endorsement to those who require it for appointment to and professional employment in the following settings:

- MIL - Military chaplain
- HC - Healthcare chaplain (hospital, hospice, residential healthcare, Veterans health)
- PR - Prison or correctional institution chaplain
- PS – Public safety chaplain (law enforcement, fire, emergency services)
- WP - Workplace chaplain
- RC - Retirement community or elder services chaplain
- CH - Children’s home or youth services chaplain
- LC - Life coach
- SD - Spiritual director
- TC - Therapeutic counselor (pastoral counselor, clinical social worker, mental health therapist, marriage and family therapist, substance abuse counselor)
- CPE - Clinical pastoral education certified educator
- OSM - Other specialized ministry of professional pastoral care

UMEA provides approval to those who require it to serve as volunteer chaplains in the following settings:

- CAP - Civil Air Patrol volunteer chaplain
- CGA - Coast Guard Auxiliary volunteer chaplain
- SGC - State Guard volunteer chaplain
- HCV – Healthcare volunteer chaplain
- PRV - Prison or correctional institution chaplain
- LEV - Law enforcement volunteer chaplain
- FEV - Fire and emergency services volunteer chaplain
- OVC – Other specialized volunteer chaplains

Endorsement is granted for an identified setting, not a particular employer or institution.

## **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 endorsement. UMEA, rather, assesses applicants for endorsement on their readiness for professional service in specialized settings as representatives of the church.

Endorsed clergy remain amenable to their annual conferences and the *Book of Discipline* throughout their ministries, and conferences remain responsible for supporting clergy appointed to



extensions ministries as required by the *Book of Discipline*.

## **RELATIONSHIPS to OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

Ministry in endorsed settings is a multilateral partnership that includes the church, the employer, the state and the professional organizations which train and certify clergy for specialized ministries.

Each institution has distinct roles and authorities. Professional organizations establish ethical guidelines, competency standards and training requirements for those they certify. State or local governments may establish similar standards for licensing individuals who practice therapeutic counseling.

Employers determine qualifications for employment, including the need for endorsement, certification and/or licensing. UMEA's unique role is to identify clergy who are deeply rooted in The United Methodist Church, divinely called, professionally qualified and ecclesiastically authorized to provide the full range of ministry required in specialized settings.

UMEA participates in dialogue with its habitual partners through multiple channels to improve the care its endorsees provide and to represent the interests of the church. While recognizing the authority of its partners in their respective spheres, UMEA retains its distinctive identity, focus and authority to speak for the church in matters of endorsement.

As the church's representative, the director of endorsement is responsible for communicating with employers on all matters related to ministerial functions, integrity, and professional standards.

## **SECTION 2 – REQUIREMENTS**

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS for ENDORSEMENT**

1. Except as noted below, applicants for endorsement must be elders or deacons in full connection, provisional members of the annual conference (elder or deacon), associate clergy members of the annual conference or licensed local pastors.
2. Applicants must intend to secure an appointable position in the endorsed setting.
3. The applicant's bishop must be willing to appoint the applicant to the requested setting if suitable employment is found.
4. Provisional members and licensed local pastors must receive the permission of their bishops to be appointed to ministries outside the bounds of the annual conference.
5. The applicant must be interviewed by a committee of experienced peers. At a minimum, the interview must address the following questions, with the applicant's response noted in the panel's written recommendation.
  - a. How have you identified and addressed areas where you need to grow in your personal and professional life?
  - b. How do you see your ministry in this setting as an extension of the church's mission in the world?
  - c. How do you understand this ministry to be grounded in our Wesleyan theology and our work and mission as the United Methodist Church?



6. The applicant must receive the approval of the Endorsing Committee.

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS for VOLUNTEER CHAPLAIN APPROVAL**

1. Applicants must be elders or deacons in full connection, provisional members of the annual conference (elder or deacon), associate members of the annual conference or licensed local pastors serving under appointment. Clergy on leave of absence are not eligible for approval.
2. The district superintendent must verify the applicant's ministerial status and affirms that they are willing for the applicant to serve in the requested capacity.
3. The applicant must receive the approval of the director of endorsement.

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS for MILITARY CHAPLAIN CANDIDATES**

1. Applicants must be enrolled in a seminary approved by the United Methodist University Senate and registered through their district superintendent as candidates for ministry (§310.1.b).
2. Applicants must sign the *Bearing of Arms* statement found in the *Appendix* to this policy.
3. The district superintendents must verify the applicant's candidacy status and affirm that they are willing for the applicant to participate in the program.
4. The applicant must receive the approval of the director of endorsement.

### **PREPARATION for SPECIALIZED MINISTRY**

Ministry in every specialized setting requires professional preparation beyond those minimums expected of all clergy by the *Book of Discipline*. Clergy develop the competencies required for specialized ministries through a combination of employer-provided training, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), academic coursework, professional seminars, self-study and other means. Employers determine which means of preparation and certification are acceptable for those they employ. Professional associations establish ethical guidelines, competency standards and training requirements for those they certify.

All endorsees are expected throughout their ministries to:

1. Be proactive in seeking the specialized knowledge and competencies that will best serve their constituents, meet their employers' expectations and provide for their long-term professional development.
2. Participate in professional associations, communities of interest or similar peer groups for the sake of camaraderie, mutual encouragement, shared learning and to support the overall growth of the specialized profession.

UMEA has long recognized the following organizations as providers of appropriate training, certification, and/or professional association in their respective fields. UMEA habitually recommends them to applicants and endorsees.

- American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT)
- American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA)
- Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE)
- Association of Professional Chaplains (APC)



- College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP)
- Federation of Fire Chaplains (FFC)
- Fellowship of United Methodist Spiritual Directors and Retreat Leaders (FUMSDRL)
- International Association of Civil Aviation Chaplains (IACAC)
- International Coaching Federation (ICF)
- International Conference of Police Chaplains (ICPC)
- Military Chaplains Association (MCA)
- National Association of Veteran Affairs Chaplains (NAVAC)
- National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplaincy (NIBIC)
- Spiritual Directors International (SDI)
- United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries (UMA)

Other professional associations may also provide suitable training and certification. Not all ministries will look the same, even within the same endorsed setting. Except as specifically noted, there is no one acceptable way to prepare for ministry in specialized settings. All applicants should be prepared to discuss their preparation for ministry and explain why it is appropriate for their calling.

## MILITARY CHAPLAINS

1. All prospective applicants for military service must sign and abide by the non-combatant *Bearing of Arms* statement found in the *Appendix* to this policy.
2. Endorsement for active-duty military service is limited to elders in full connection.
3. Provisional elders may be endorsed for service with the Reserve or National Guard. Reserve component chaplains who have completed the basic chaplain course may be involuntarily mobilized and deployed. They cannot, however, volunteer for deployment, mobilization or active duty.
4. Applicants for endorsement with the reserve components must consult with their district superintendents and stab-parish relations committees regarding the impact of military service on the applicant's congregation.
5. The director of endorsement will confer with chaplains and their bishops before deciding whether to grant endorsement to military retirees recalled to active duty.
6. UMEA will not withdraw military endorsements for the convenience of the endorsee, to avoid deployments or hardships or to provide expedited discharge from service. Endorsees will follow the provisions of military regulations to request authorized personnel actions.
7. See the paragraphs on *Administrative Withdrawal of Endorsement* for policies related to leaves of absence from the annual conference.
8. UMEA is a member of the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF). Endorsed military chaplains will be guided by the principles contained in the NCMAF *Covenant and Code of Ethics*. See the *Appendix* for the text.

## THERAPEUTIC COUNSELORS

1. Pastoral counselors, psychotherapists, behavioral health providers, clinical social workers,



marriage and family counselors, substance abuse counselors and those in similar therapeutic professions must be licensed by the state in which they practice. Where state licensing is not available, appropriate certification through the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy Program) or the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy may be acceptable. Provisional endorsement may be granted to those pursuing licensures.

2. Therapists in private practice will adhere to the self-employment requirements found below.

### **LIFE COACHES**

1. Endorsed life coaches must be certified as an Associate Certified Coach or higher by the International Coaching Federation prior to endorsement.
2. Life coaches in private practice will adhere to the self-employment requirements found below.

### **FIRE AND POLICE CHAPLAINS**

To ensure chaplains operate safely in dangerous environments, fire, and police chaplains, including volunteers, are required to complete training with the Federation of Fire Chaplains (FFC), the International Conference of Police Chaplains (ICPC) or similar regional associations.

## **SECTION 3 – ENDORSEMENT PROVISIONS**

### **APPLICATION and APPROVAL**

Initial approval endorsement is granted only at the approval of the Endorsing Committee. The decision to approve volunteer chaplains and military chaplain candidates is delegated to the director of endorsement. Upon approval, UMEA will provide the documentation required to apply for employment, seek board certification, or establish credentials with volunteer organizations.

The UMEA stab will determine the format and content of the application in consultation with the Endorsing Committee. Applications require payment of fees as determined by the UMEA stab.

Applicants will not be given access to products of the deliberative process. This protects the integrity of the process and ensures that recommenders, interviewers, and reviewers can provide the Endorsing Committee with candid feedback about the applicant.

UMEA may invite those not recommended for endorsement by their interviewer panel to submit additional materials before their file is considered by the Endorsing Committee.

The director of endorsement may, in exceptional circumstances, grant provisional endorsement to very well qualified applicants when required for employment applications, pending completion of the endorsement process. Such endorsement will be as limited as possible in scope and validity. Military applicants may be considered for accession based on a provisional endorsement but will not be accessed if a final endorsement is not submitted in a timely manner.



## **POLICIES FOR APPEAL OF A CANDIDATE TO MEET A NEW UMEA INTERVIEW COMMITTEE**

A candidate may appeal the denial of their endorsement by the UMEA Endorsement Committee in writing by emailing the appeal to [umea@gbhem.org](mailto:umea@gbhem.org) within 30 calendar days of the date on which the denial was sent to the candidate.

If a timely appeal is lodged by the candidate, the UMEA Endorsement Committee will review the process, application, and written work originally submitted by the candidate. A candidate may also submit additional written material with candidate's appeal: updated written essays, new recommendation letters, or any other documentation the candidate wishes to be considered. All documentation must be received within the 30-day window as outlined above.

A new interview team will be assigned to reinterview the candidate.

Upon completion of the appeal interview, a recommendation will be made by the interviewers to the UMEA Endorsement Committee.

The UMEA Endorsement Committee will vote on the interviewers' recommendation.

The appeal decision of the UMEA Endorsement Committee is final.

## **MAINTENANCE of ENDORSEMENT**

UMEA provides important information and administrative directions to endorsees through email systems shared with GBHEM. Endorsees agree to receive email from GBHEM as a condition of endorsement, and to comply with UMEA's directions related to endorsement.

Endorsees will file an annual report with the endorsing agency during the last quarter of the calendar year using the form provided by UMEA. Endorsees are not required to send UMEA a copy of the annual reports they submitted to their annual conferences.

Endorsees are required to provide UMEA with changes to their contact information, employment status, and appointment status as they occur.

UMEA may terminate endorsements when endorsees fail to communicate with the endorsing agency.

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

## **SECTION 4 — CONDUCT of MINISTRY**

### **POSITION of TRUST**

Endorsees 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 and COLLEGIALLY**

While remaining faithful to The United Methodist Church, its teachings and its practices, UMEA expects endorsees to provide spiritual care to everyone within their areas of responsibility with the



same level of commitment that they provide to their coreligionists. UMEA also expects all endorsees to work collegially with clergy from other religious bodies to better meet the needs of all constituents. If in a supervisory position, endorsees will respect the practices and beliefs of the clergy they supervise.

## **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Sexual 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 loss 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.

## **RACE and ETHNICITY**

Discrimination based on race or ethnicity is inimical to the gospel and will not be tolerated.

Almost all the institutions in which endorsees serve have formal statements supporting racial equality and opposing discrimination. Endorsees will encourage their institutions to operate in accordance with their creeds, identify blind spots and eliminate systemic barriers to equality.

Endorsees will stand with victims of unlawful discrimination in their places of work and, when requested by the victims, use their authorities and privileges to intervene on the victim's behalf.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

"All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences." (§341.6) 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. See the *Bearing of Arms* statement in the *Appendix*.

## **BAPTISMS**

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 pedobaptist 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.

Chaplains will not rebaptize individuals who have already received the Christian sacrament of baptism.

## **WEDDINGS**

Endorsed clergy may solemnize marriages after due counsel with the parties involved in accordance with the laws of the local jurisdiction and the requirements of the *Book of Discipline* when they determine that a couple is ready for marriage.

The decision to perform or not perform the ceremony shall be the right and responsibility of the endorsee. All clergy have the right to exercise and preserve their conscience when requested to perform any marriage, union or blessing. Endorsees are expected to provide administrative and material support to all eligible constituents, even when endorsees cannot personally perform the requested ceremony for reasons of conscience, including referrals and assistance in finding appropriate religious support for their constituents' needs.

## **REPORTING PASTORAL ACTS**

Baptisms, professions of faith and individuals received into membership should be reported as soon as possible to a local church (United Methodist or other Christian denomination) with which the individual or family wishes to associate. Whenever possible, all those receiving these rites should be immediately entered on the rolls of a local congregation.

When it is impossible to connect a new Christian or church member with a local congregation, endorsees will send a record of the pastoral act to UMEA so that individual may be included in the General Membership Roll of the church (§223). Individuals may remain on the General Membership Roll until their 18th birthday if they were baptized as infants or for a maximum of 8 years if they were baptized or received on profession of faith.

Endorsees will give those baptized or received a record of the act and provide them with contact information for GBHEM. Those on the general roll should be encouraged to unite with a local church as soon as possible and to notify GBHEM when they have done so.

When a record of a pastoral act is sent to a local church, it should not be sent to UMEA. A record of baptized membership or professing membership should only be recorded in one place.



A copy of the standard *Pastoral Act Form* may be requested from [umea@gbhem.org](mailto:umea@gbhem.org). UMEA does not maintain a record of weddings or other pastoral acts that endorsees may perform.

## **PRIVATE PRACTICE and SELF-EMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS**

Endorsees in private practice should establish a board of directors, and based on best practices, it is recommended that, at a minimum, the board should include:

- An ordained representative of the annual conference in which the practice is located
- A professional from the endorsed setting
- A person with business background
- A person from the legal profession

The board of directors will provide general oversight of the endorsee's practice of ministry and require regular reports from the endorsee. The board will advise and assist the endorsee to:

- Establish policies to protect both the practitioner and the practice's clients.
- Organize and/or incorporate in accordance with state laws as appropriate.
- Comply with legal requirements.
- Develop a financial plan that provides for the practitioner's needs both now and in retirement.
- Ensure that the practice is covered by malpractice insurance
- Confirm that the endorsee is compliant with state laws (licenses, etc.).

## **SECTION 5 – TRANSITIONS and CHANGES IN STATUS**

### **CHANGES in APPOINTMENT**

Endorsements are considered "active" and "open" when individuals are appointed to the specific settings for which they are approved. Initial endorsements will be carried as open for no more than two years pending employment and appointment in the endorsed setting. Endorsements become "inactive" and "closed" when an endorsee:

- Fails to secure employment and appointment in the endorsed setting within two years of initial approval for endorsement.
- Is appointed to a ministry that falls outside the scope of endorsement and no longer holds an appointment within the endorsed setting
- Is placed on voluntary or involuntary leave of absence from the annual conference.
- Retires from the annual conference.

In most cases, UMEA can continue to provide the documentation required for board certification or new employment applications when an endorsement is in an inactive status. UMEA can reopen a new period of active endorsement when the endorsee obtains an appointment in the approved setting. However, the director of endorsement will consider all factors involved before granting new endorsement credentials, including the length and circumstances of the absence from the setting. Approval may be conditional, and the decision may be elevated to the Endorsing Committee.



Endorsed 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 personal leave of absence or medical leave (as appropriate).

### **CHANGE of ENDORSED SETTING**

Endorsement is granted for a specific setting. Requests for endorsement to additional settings is not automatic and may be conditional. Applicants must be qualified and eligible for appointment to the requested setting, may be required to re-interview and may be subject to additional conditions at the discretion of the director of endorsement. The decision may be elevated to the Endorsing Committee.

### **RETIREMENT from the ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

All open endorsements formally close and become inactive when endorsees retire from the annual conference.

With the approval of their bishop, clergy may be granted initial endorsement in retirement upon meeting the normal requirements established by the Endorsing Committee. Clergy granted endorsement in retirement will initially be approved in an inactive status.

Retired endorsees in an inactive status may continue to receive the documentation required for board certification and job applications. Retired endorsees may continue to accept occasional, irregular, or short-term employment consistent with the ministerial authorities they retain in retirement. Endorsees not formally appointed to their endorsed settings are no longer required to submit an annual report to UMEA but must provide a report of their ministerial activities to the charge conferences where they hold membership.

Retired clergy may be appointed full or part-time to their endorsed settings under ¶358.6 or ¶320.5.c. Retired endorsees serving under appointment may request temporary “Retired Appointment” status from UMEA. “Retired Appointment” status is granted year-to-year and must be renewed in the endorsee’s annual report. Appointments served in a retired status are not creditable for claims against the Chaplain Supplemental Pension Grant Fund.

### **ENDORSED CLERGY TRANSFERRING INTO the UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

1. Clergy endorsed by another denomination who transfer into The United Methodist Church under the provisions of ¶ 347 and who have been accepted as provisional members in an annual conference may apply for provisional endorsement.
2. In all cases, the director of endorsement will verify with the current endorser that applicants are leaving their former denominations in good standing, with no credible accusations of moral misconduct.
3. When possible, the director of endorsement will coordinate the effective date of the change of endorsement with the former endorser.
4. Changes of endorsement for military chaplains will be managed under policies and procedures established by the National Conference of Ministry to the Armed Forces



(NCMAF) to ensure continuity of endorsement.

5. Full endorsement will be granted upon the candidate becoming a full member of the annual conference and fulfilling any required certifications.

### **ENDORSED CLERGY TRANSFERRING OUT of the UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

1. UMEA may, at the director of endorsement's discretion, maintain the endorsement of clergy who transfer to another denomination through a reasonable period of transition. Advance notice and coordination are required.
2. Changes of endorsement for military chaplains will be managed under policies and procedures established by the National Conference of Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) to ensure continuity of endorsement.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE WITHDRAWAL of ENDORSEMENT**

Endorsement is automatically withdrawn when endorsees lose their status as clergy in the United Methodist Church through:

- Voluntary withdrawal from the ministerial office and surrender of credentials
- Any annual conference action that removes an endorsee's credentials
- Transfer to another denomination
- Honorable location or administrative location
- Discontinuance from provisional membership in the annual conference
- Loss of ecclesiastical license for ministry by a Licensed Local Pastor

Endorsement is automatically withdrawn when endorsement or ordination is granted by another endorsing body.

Endorsement is automatically withdrawn for therapeutic ministries upon the loss of required state licenses.

Endorsement will be withdrawn 30 days after UMEA receives a written request from the endorsee's bishop revoking permission to serve in the endorsed setting. UMEA will immediately notify the endorsee of the pending withdrawal. The endorsee may choose to waive the 30-day waiting period and accept immediate withdrawal of endorsement. The bishop may rescind the request any time prior to the effective date of withdrawal.

Military endorsement will be withdrawn for active-duty chaplains placed on voluntary or involuntary leave of absence. Reserve component chaplains may be placed on voluntary leave of absence and retain their endorsement, but they may not serve voluntarily on extended active duty. Reserve component endorsements will be withdrawn for chaplains placed on involuntary leave of absence.

Endorsement will be administratively withdrawn when UMEA loses contact with an endorsee, as evidenced by repeated failures to file an annual report, to respond to email communications, or to maintain accurate contact information with UMEA.



## **VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL from ENDORSEMENT**

Voluntary withdrawal from endorsement may be granted in the best interests of The United Methodist Church, the individual or the employing institution. All requests for voluntary withdrawal from endorsement will be submitted to the Endorsing Committee in writing.

The Endorsing Committee may

- a) grant voluntary withdrawal;
- b) deny voluntary withdrawal, or
- c) change voluntary withdrawal of endorsement to involuntary withdrawal.

Endorsements will not be withdrawn solely for the convenience of the individual or to avoid completing a contract.

## **WITHDRAWAL of ENDORSEMENT for CAUSE**

The authority to withdraw endorsements for cause is reserved to the Endorsing Committee. Endorsement may be removed for reasons that include ineffectiveness, incompetence, violations of professional ethics or any chargeable offense in *The Book of Discipline*. In the event, charges are being pursued by the church, the employer, the military or civil judicial systems, endorsement is normally continued until a decision is reached. Actions of the Endorsing Committee will remain independent of actions taken by any other institutional structure.

The Endorsing Committee will provide individuals with written notice of pending withdrawal to endorsees and provide them with copies of all material related to the decision no less than 30 days before the effective date of the action.

Endorsees who wish to contest the Endorsing Committee's decision shall provide written notice to [umea@gbhem.org](mailto:umea@gbhem.org) of the appeal and all related information and documentation the endorsee wishes to be considered in the appeal within 30 calendar days of being notified of withdrawal of endorsement. All decisions of the Endorsing Committee are final.

## **SECTION 6 — APPENDIX**

### **CHAPLAIN SUPPLEMENTAL PENSION GRANT FUND**

The Chaplain Supplemental Pension Grant 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 (§1406.18) based on the economic health of the fund.

### **BEARING of ARMS**

All clergy endorsed or approved for military chaplaincy and the military chaplain candidate program



will affirm the following statement in writing prior to endorsement.

*I will not wear, carry, or use a weapon in the conduct of my duties as a chaplain. Since we “train as we fight,” I will not undergo weapons training or qualification. If I determine the use of a weapon as necessary to preserve another person’s life, I will make that moral decision considering this policy.*

*I will report my use of a firearm to UMEA as soon as possible. I understand that the endorsement committee, UMEA staff, my bishop and district superintendent will determine what actions will be taken in terms of continued appointment, endorsement or approval.*

## **NCMAF COVENANT and CODE of ETHICS**

### **National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces**

*Adopted by the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, January 2011*

#### ***The Covenant***

Having accepted God’s Call to minister to people who serve in the Armed Forces of our country, I covenant to serve God and these people with God’s help: to deepen my obedience to the Commandments, to love the Lord our God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself.

In affirmation of this commitment, I will abide by the Code of Ethics for Chaplains of the Armed Forces, and I will faithfully support its purposes and ideals. As further affirmation of my commitment, I covenant with my colleagues in ministry that we will hold one another accountable for fulfillment of all public actions set forth in our Code of Ethics.

#### ***The Code of Ethics***

I will hold in trust the traditions and practices of my religious body.

I will carefully adhere to whatever direction may be conveyed to me by my endorsing body for maintenance of my endorsement.

I understand as a chaplain in the Armed Forces that I must function in a pluralistic environment with chaplains of other religious bodies to provide for ministry to all military personnel and their families entrusted to my care.

I will seek to provide pastoral care and ministry to persons of religious bodies other than my own within my area of responsibility with the same investment of myself as I give to members of my own religious body. I will work collegially with chaplains of religious bodies other than my own as together we seek to provide as full a ministry as possible to our people. I will respect the beliefs and traditions of my colleagues and those to whom I minister. When conducting services of worship that include persons of other than my religious body I will draw upon those beliefs, principles and practices that we have in common.

I will, if in a supervisory position, respect the practices and beliefs of each chaplain I supervise, and exercise care not to require any service or practice that would be in violation of the faith practices of their religious body.

I will seek to support all colleagues in ministry by building constructive relationships wherever I serve, both with the stab where I work and with colleagues throughout the military environment.

I will maintain a disciplined ministry in such ways as keeping hours of prayer and devotion, endeavoring to maintain wholesome family relationships, and regularly engaging in educational and



recreational activities for professional and personal development. I will seek to maintain good health habits.

I will recognize that my obligation is to provide ministry to all members of the Military Services, their families and other authorized personnel. When on active duty, I will only accept added responsibility in civilian work or ministry if it does not interfere with the overall effectiveness of my primary military ministry.

I will defend my colleagues against unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, race religion or national origin.

I will hold in confidence all privileged and confidential communication.

I will respect all persons of other religious faiths. I will respond to any expressed need for spiritual guidance and pastoral care to those who seek my counsel.

I will show personal love for God in my life and ministry, as I maintain the discipline and promote the integrity of the profession to which I have been called.

I recognize the special power aborded me by my ministerial office.

I will never use that power in ways that violate the personhood of another human being, religiously, emotionally or sexually. I will use my pastoral office only for that which is best for the persons under my ministry.

— Revised, April 2026