



ENDORSEMENT GUIDE

"... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
— **Genesis 12:3**

What Is Endorsement?

As used by government agencies, professional associations and employers, endorsement denotes that a person is ecclesiastically qualified and authorized to provide religious ministry and spiritual care in a specialized setting as a representative of his or her faith group. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry provides endorsement on behalf of The United Methodist Church for clergy 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 that a person is eligible to be appointed to an extension ministry under the provisions of ¶344.1.b of the Book of Discipline.

Endorsement by GBHEM affirms that individuals:

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

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 service in the requested setting as representatives of the church.



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

The United Methodist Church

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

- Endorsed clergy are responsible for their own employment and for coordinating their appointments with their annual conferences.
- Endorsement alone is not usually sufficient to gain employment. Many employers require Clinical Pastoral Education or other professional training, state licensing or board certification.
- Endorsement is granted for an identified setting, not a specific employer.
- UMEA's policies and procedures are governed by the *United Methodist Book of Discipline* and GBHEM's *Endorsement Policy Handbook*, at:
gbhem.org/ministry/clergy-leaders/chaplain-and-endorsement-resources/.

Military Chaplaincy

Military chaplains must be elders in full connection for active duty or provisional elders for reserve component service. To meet military requirements, 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.
- Have two years of pastoral ministry experience for active duty.
- 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.

Civilian Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care

Clergy may be endorsed for appointive settings that include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Healthcare Chaplain (Hospital, Hospice, Residential Health Care and Veterans Health) | • Retirement Community Chaplain |
| • Prison Chaplain | • Children's Home Chaplain |
| • Fire or police chaplain | • Therapeutic Counselor (Pastoral Counselor, Mental Health Therapist, Marriage and Family Therapist and Substance Abuse Counselor) |
| • Workplace Chaplain | |



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

The United Methodist Church

- Clinical Pastoral Education Certified Educator
- Life Coach or Spiritual Director
- Other Specialized Ministries of Professional Pastoral Care

Clergy can also be approved for volunteer chaplain settings, including Civil Air Patrol, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, State Guard, fire and police chaplaincy and other settings that require ecclesiastical approval. Clergy serving in these volunteer settings require the approval of their district superintendents.

Preparing for Specialized Ministries

Ministry in every specialized setting requires professional preparation beyond the 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 employment. Professional associations establish ethical guidelines, competency standards and training requirements for those they certify. Different settings require different forms of preparation, credentialing and certification. Contact the endorsing agency if you have questions about 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. See our *Private Practice Guidelines* at gbhem.org/ministry/clergy-leaders/chaplain-and-endorsement-resources/.

All endorsees are expected throughout their ministries to:

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

UMEA acknowledges the following organizations as providers of appropriate training, certification and professional association in their respective fields.

- American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT)
- American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA)
- Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE)
- Association of Law Enforcement Chaplains (ALEC)
- Association of Professional Chaplains (APC)
- College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP)



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

The United Methodist Church

- 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)

Requirements for Endorsement

- Applicant is a full or provisional elder; full or provisional deacon; associate member or licensed local pastor. Only elders may be endorsed for an appointment to military chaplaincy.
- Approval by the applicant's bishop to seek an appointment in the requested setting, or district superintendent approval for volunteer chaplaincy.
- Professional training and certification as appropriate for the setting.
- Completion of an application and interview with UMEA.
- Approval by the endorsing committee for those seeking regular endorsement.

Applying for Endorsement

Apply online at methodist.smapply.io.

Register for an account and complete the application for regular endorsement or volunteer approval. For those seeking regular 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 yourself, your clergy status, your education and your background

- A recent photograph
- Three short essays
- Two personal references and their contact information
- Contact information for your bishop and district superintendent

The application process for volunteer chaplain approval (Civil Air Patrol, Coast Guard Auxiliary, State Guard and volunteer fire or police) is somewhat shorter with an application fee of \$20.

The Endorsement Interview

When all your materials have been received – including reference reports – UMEA will schedule an interview with you. We conduct Zoom interviews three times a year. Applications must be fully complete – including references received – before we can schedule your interview. The process



HIGHER EDUCATION & MINISTRY

The United Methodist Church

normally takes a few months to complete, based on the timing of your interview and how quickly your references respond.

Applicants for regular endorsement will be interviewed by a panel of experienced chaplains or pastoral counselors. Whenever possible, at least one member of the panel will represent the setting for which you are seeking endorsement.

Following the interview, the application moves to the Endorsing Committee of GBHEM's Board of Directors for a final decision.

Contact Us Early in the Process

We strongly recommend you contact us early in your journey toward one of these specialized ministries so that you understand the requirements of your chosen setting, avoid wrong turns and dead ends and have enough time to complete the required steps.

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

Phone: 615-340-7411

Email: umea@gbhem.org

Web: gbhem.org/umea

— Revised, **August 2025**