



# United Methodist Endorsing Agency

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

[www.gbhem.org/chaplains](http://www.gbhem.org/chaplains) • [umea@gbhem.org](mailto:umea@gbhem.org) • (615) 340-7411

## Endorsement Guide

*... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*

*Genesis 12:3*

### What Is Endorsement?

Endorsement is a term of art used by government agencies, professional associations, and employers to denote 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 *Book of Discipline* authorizes the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), acting through the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA), to grant endorsements for chaplaincy and other ministries of pastoral care in settings such as healthcare, children's homes, retirement homes, prisons, workplaces, counseling centers, and the military.

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 United Methodist Church, endorsement affirms that an individual is eligible to be appointed to an extension ministry or an appointment beyond the local church under the provisions of ¶344.1.b or ¶331.4.b of the *Book of Discipline*. Endorsement by GBHEM 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 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.

### 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.

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*, which is available on the GBHEM website.

## 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
- 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.

## 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 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:

- 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 has long recognized the following organizations as providers of appropriate training, certification, and 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)
- Transitional Intentional Interim Ministers Association (TIIMSA)
- United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries (UMA)

## 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.
- 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.

## Requirements for Endorsement

1. 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.
2. Approval by the applicant's bishop to serve in the requested setting.
3. Professional training and certification as appropriate for the setting.
4. Completion of an application and interview with UMEA.
5. Approval by the endorsing committee.

## Applying for Endorsement

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 yourself, your clergy status, your education, and your background
- A recent photograph
- A short life history describing how God brought you to this calling in your ministry
- A brief essay 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 will be conducted 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. You will be notified of the recommendation at the time of your interview. Areas to be examined 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 ecclesiastical 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

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

---

### 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](mailto:umea@gbhem.org)

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

**Apply Online:** <https://methodist.smapply.io>