

The chaplaincy is a specific calling to represent the Free Methodist Church – USA (FMC-USA) in specialized ministry settings as an extension of the denomination and the chaplain’s ordaining conference. Chaplains minister in the branches of the United States Armed Forces, Civil Air Patrol, Bureau of Prisons, Department of Veteran Affairs, health care, hospital and hospice networks, police, law enforcement, fire and emergency services agencies, industrial, market place, and other community settings.

There are two categories of Ecclesiastical Chaplain Credentials: Ecclesiastical Chaplain Endorsement and Ecclesiastical Chaplain Candidate Endorsement (primarily with the United States Armed Forces).

** Laity, Local Ministerial Candidates (LMC), and Deacons are under the guidance of their local church pastor and Board of Administration in regards to local volunteer community ministry.*

Ecclesiastical Chaplain Endorsement

Ecclesiastical Chaplain Endorsement is an affirmation that the endorsed chaplain will be performing a critical extension ministry of the FMC – USA and has presented evidence to perform chaplain ministry by their ministerial calling, educational training, pastoral experience, and personal giftings.

Persons seeking endorsement to serve in the United States Armed Forces, Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), and the Bureau of Prisons are required to complete a Master of Divinity or equivalency, be fully ordained to Elder, and gain pastoral ministry experience. Additionally, the VA requires the applicant to complete some units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). Many large medical, hospital, and hospice health care systems require or prefer CPE training. Most police and fire departments require full ordination and Ecclesiastical Endorsement.

** Some chaplaincy domains do not require a Master of Divinity, only that the applicant be ecclesiastically ordained and endorsed.*

Ecclesiastical Chaplain Candidate Endorsement

A. United States Armed Forces

The United States Armed Forces offer a chaplain candidate seminarian program that requires Ecclesiastical Chaplain Candidate Endorsement as a precursor to full ecclesiastical endorsement. Approved applicants are commissioned officers by their desired branch of the Armed Forces and serve as “Chaplain Candidates” in paid status on active duty orders for an introduction to the military setting. They do not wear the chaplain cross on their uniform, nor are they referred to as “Chaplain” until they are ordained to Elder, receive full Ecclesiastical Endorsement, and are commissioned into a branch of the military as fully trained religious ministry professionals.

B. Other Chaplain Domains

When a Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC) is pursuing full ordination credentials, and the institutional domain in which they desire to serve (police, fire, hospital, hospice, etc.) will accept an interim credential, the Endorsing Agent may grant them an Ecclesiastical Chaplain Candidate

Endorsement until they complete all requirements for full endorsement. While in this status they will be referred to as a “Chaplain Candidate.”

Ecclesiastical Application Process

Applications are available through the FMC-USA Co-Directors of Chaplain Ministries/Endorsing Agent. When all application requirements are met, the Endorsing Agent will recommend the applicant to the Board of Bishops for ecclesiastical endorsement or chaplain candidacy endorsement.

Ecclesiastically Endorsed Chaplains:

1. An ordained Elder in good standing of a Free Methodist Annual Conference.
2. Recommended by their Conference Ministerial Education Guidance (MEG) Board.
3. The MEG Board will provide verification of a current background check that includes basic searches of national criminal records, national sex offender registries, financial history/credit check, and a social trace.
4. Meet all professional requirements for their chaplain setting.
5. Be an active participant in a local FM Church, or when not possible, involved in the ministry of a local church in their community.
6. A member of the Free Methodist Chaplains Association (FMCA).
7. When possible, attend the annual FMCA Professional Development Training Conference.
8. Contribute monthly a tithe of their tithe to the FMCA Chaplain Account.
9. Violation of Ordination requirements will result in forfeiture of Endorsement.

Chaplain Candidate Endorsement:

1. Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC) pursuing ordination to Elder.
2. An active member of a Free Methodist Church, under the supervision of a Lead Pastor in the FMC-USA.
3. Recommended by their Conference Ministerial Education Guidance (MEG) Board.
4. The MEG Board or their local church will provide verification of a current background check that includes basic searches of national criminal records, national sex offender registries, financial history/credit check, and a social trace.
5. A member of the Free Methodist Chaplains Association (FMCA)
6. When possible, attend the annual FMCA Professional Development Training Conference.
7. Contribute monthly a tithe of their tithe to the FMCA Chaplain Account.
8. Violation of CMC requirements will result in forfeiture of Chaplain Candidate Approval.

Review and Evaluation

Endorsement is granted for service in a specific institutional setting. Should an endorsed chaplain transfer from one employment institutional setting to another, they should request a new updated endorsement. Any change of setting without a new request may result in loss of endorsement.

Retirement

Chaplains who retire and remain in good standing with their ordaining FMC-USA Conference, will remain in an endorsed status (emeritus) in recognition of past service and potential to serve as a mentor.



Guidelines for Chaplain Ecclesiastical Endorsement

Guidelines updated 12/01/2020 (This publication supersedes 9/14/06)