



United Methodist Endorsing Agency

General Board of Higher Education & Ministry Division of Ordained Ministry

www.gbhem.org/chaplains • umea@gbhem.org • 615-340-7411

Ecclesiastical Approval Process

UMEA provides ecclesiastical approval for United Methodist clergy to serve as volunteer chaplains in certain civilian settings, and for United Methodist seminary students who are seeking enrollment in the military chaplain candidate program. An ecclesiastical approval is not an endorsement according to the *2016 Book of Discipline* (§ 1421.5)

Volunteer Chaplain Settings

1. Civil Air Patrol (CAP), www.cap.gov
2. Coast Guard Auxiliary, www.uscg.mil
3. Volunteer State Guard (varies by state)
4. Law Enforcement Chaplains (ICPC), www.icpc4cops.org
5. Fire (FFP) www.firechaplains.org
6. Disaster services, EMS
7. Other unpaid volunteer chaplain programs (hospitals, prisons, etc.)

All clergy seeking ecclesiastical approval for the above settings must complete an application. Contact UMEA, umea@gbhem.org, to gain access to the online application system. UMEA will contact one personal reference and the district superintendent provided by the applicant.

The Military Chaplain Candidate Program

Each branch of the military services has a program by which qualified seminary students or recent seminary graduates may be commissioned as military officers and participate in chaplain learning experiences. 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. Applicants must be eligible to receive a commission as military officer. Participants are paid for their training days commensurate with the military rank. Military requirements and policies are subject to change; always check with your recruiter for the current requirements and specific guidance.

Approval for the chaplain candidate program does not serve as an endorsement for active duty or reserve component chaplaincy, nor does it assume that such endorsement will be guaranteed. Under no circumstances will a chaplain candidate become a chaplain without undergoing the full endorsement process.

Requirements for Military Chaplain Candidates

1. Must be enrolled full time in a United Methodist approved seminary. (Army accepts recent graduates)
2. Must be preparing for ordination as a United Methodist elder and be registered as a candidate for ordained ministry through your District Superintendent (*2016 Book of Discipline* ¶ 310.1.b.).
3. Must meet the age and physical requirements as specified by the armed forces.

Steps for Chaplain Candidate Program

1. Register and apply online at <https://methodist.smapply.io>.
2. For the Army or Navy, file an application now with the appropriate office of the chief of chaplains. You will be expected to take the military physical examination before completing the process for ecclesiastical approval.
3. The Air Force requires ecclesiastical approval from UMEA before filing an application.

The Chaplain Candidate Approval Process

- Complete application form online at methodist.smapply.io.
- Write a brief life sketch (one page) and upload with your application.
- Upload a photo and academic transcripts with your application.

UMEA will contact your district superintendent and your local pastor. You will be set up for a personal interview with someone in your area that is an active duty, reserve or retired chaplain. The decision to grant or deny approval is based on all this information. **The approval process normally takes 6 - 12 weeks.**

In order to meet basic requirements, you must:

- be a citizen or legal permanent resident of the United States and be eligible for a security clearance
- be physically qualified for general service based on an examination by the military.
- meet other current requirements determined by the military

Applicants are responsible for contacting the military branch for which they are seeking approval.

U.S. Army Recruiting Command

Phone: 502-626-0722

www.goarmy.com/chaplain

U.S. Navy Recruiting Command

Phone: 901-874-9216

www.navy.com/officer/clergy

U.S. Air Force Recruiting Service

Phone: 800-803-2452

www.airforce.com/chaplain

For further information contact:

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency

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