



PRESBYTERIAN FEDERAL CHAPLAINCIES

Presbyteries & Governing Bodies HANDBOOK

*I was a stranger and you welcomed me...
I was sick and you took care of me,
I was in prison and you visited me.*

Matthew 25

REVISED MARCH 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview	2
• Who Are the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies?	
• What Is an Ecclesiastical Endorsement?	
• What Is the Presbytery’s Role?	
• What Are the Reporting and Training Requirements?	
• How to Support the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies?	
• How to Access More Information?	
• Additional References	
Endorsement Process	5
Appendices:	
• I. Federal Bureau of Prisons Chaplaincy	6
• II. Department of Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy	7
• III. Military Chaplaincy: Army, Navy, Air Force (Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard)	8
• IV. Civil Air Patrol Chaplaincy	9
• V. Chaplain Candidate: (Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard)	10
Contact Information	11

OVERVIEW

This handbook has been prepared to assist our four denominational partners and their ministers in obtaining the required endorsement from the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies (PFC) to serve in a Federal chaplaincy position (Federal Bureau of Prisons, Veterans Affairs Hospitals, Military, and Civil Air Patrol).

Who Are the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies?

The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies (PFC) recruits, equips, sustains, and celebrates those who serve as chaplains within U.S. Federal Government departments, agencies, and auxiliaries and the families who support them.

- The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies represents four denominations: the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, and the Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad.
- We are the single point of contact for endorsement for federal chaplains as they minister in challenging situations transforming communities through hope beyond the reach of the local church.

What Is an Ecclesiastical Endorsement?

Ecclesiastical endorsement is the process established by the U.S. Federal Government to ensure clergy possess the skills and competencies required to serve as a chaplain in a Federal department, agency, or auxiliary.

- **Ecclesiastical endorsements must be from the official national endorsing authority of the individual's denomination (i.e. Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies)**
- **While the endorsing process requires a partnership between the Presbytery and the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies, the endorsement cannot be solely from a local church or presbytery. It must come from the PFC.**
- Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies **endorsement does not guarantee** that an applicant will be accepted into a Federal chaplaincy program; the Federal department, agency, or auxiliary applied to will make the final decision.

What Is an Ecclesiastical Endorsement? (Continued)

Ecclesiastical endorsement ensures a chaplain will work cooperatively in an interfaith environment while maintaining faithfulness to their denomination and will accommodate the religious rights of all people within their institution's scope of care to practice the faith of their choosing, or to practice no faith at all. Chaplains seek to ensure people are respected and personal beliefs are upheld.

What Is the Presbytery's Role in the Endorsement Process?

The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies can only initiate the endorsement process after the presbytery has confirmed the member is in good standing and has permission to labor in a Federal Chaplain position. The presbytery approval:

- Confirms a person's suitability for ministry in a particular setting as fully formed, spiritually mature representative of the denomination and that the person has no legal or moral barrier to ministry.
- Grants permission and supports the person's validated ministry beyond the community of a local church.

What Are the Reporting and Training Requirements?

- All endorsed chaplains **must submit** an annual report no later than 31 December each year. These will be forwarded to the chaplain's respective presbytery.
- All currently serving and endorsed chaplains, regardless of status, **are required to attend** a credentialing event in person **at least** once every three years unless prevented by mission/service requirements to maintain their professional credentials and Ecclesiastical Endorsement.

How Can I Support the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies?

- **Recruiting:** Please ensure all members of your presbytery (ministers and seminary students) are aware of the opportunities to serve as a chaplain in the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Veterans Affairs Hospitals, and the military.
- **Financial:** As a joint ministry of four denominations, we receive less than 50% of our operating funds from our supported denominations. Please prayerfully consider taking a special offering or becoming an individual giver. You can donate at presfedchap.org.

How Do I Access More Information About Federal Positions? Who Else Is Involved In the process?

- Contact a military recruiter or visit the VA, or the Federal Bureau of Prisons websites (see Appendix 7).
- Connect with the PFC for information on the endorsement and application process.
- Dialogue with their Presbytery staff/leadership for presbytery-specific requirements for serving in validated ministries.

Additional Reference:

Please see the Appendices for information on the different endorsed Federal ministries of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Veterans Affairs, Military, Civil Air Patrol, and Chaplain Candidate programs.

Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies
4125 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016-2790
(202) 630-6225
info@presfedchap.org
www.presfedchap.org

ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

To begin the process of endorsement candidates must connect with their Presbytery EP/GP and with the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies staff (info@presfedchap.org). The process includes the following:

- **Application:**

- Brief Life Sketch
- Motivation Statement
- College and Seminary Transcripts
- Denominational Resume
- Spouse Concurrence (Military)
- Photograph (jpeg)
- Sermon (Digital)
- Presbytery contact for presbytery approval (name, email, and phone number)

- **Reference Check**

- The PFC will send out the required reference forms to those listed in candidate's application.

- **Presbytery Approval Form**

- The PFC will send the required form to local presbytery.
- Candidates will need to dialogue with EP/GP, or Stated Clerk and the required committee (i.e. COM or CPM).

- **Background Check** (Source: Protect My Ministry)

- **Interview** (Normally by Zoom)

- **Endorsement Form** (Completed by the PFC)

- DD 2088 (Military)
- BP-A1119 (FBOP)
- VA Form 10-253 (VA)

The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies application packet can be found on our website (<https://presfedchap.org>).

APPENDIX I: FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS CHAPLAINCY

Federal prison chaplains provide a comprehensive program of spiritual welfare and religious guidance for inmates in a Federal correctional setting. They offer pastoral care, worship services, and support to those incarcerated. Each jurisdiction has particular qualifications for hiring chaplains.

Presbyterian ministers seeking to serve the Federal Bureau of Prisons must:

- Possess an M.Div. degree.
- Be an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament (teaching elder) with at least two years of post-ordination pastoral experience. Clinical Pastoral Education may satisfy up to one year of pastoral/spiritual experience.
- Be in good standing with local presbytery.
- Maintain personal conduct above reproach.
- Be between 21 and 37 years old for an initial appointment. The Department of Justice may grant an age waiver under certain circumstances.
- Complete an application and gain endorsement with the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies.

The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies application packet can be found on our website (<https://presfedchap.org>).

APPENDIX II: DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CHAPLAINCY (VA)

The VA Hospital Chaplaincy provides complete religious ministry to veteran patients and their families following their needs and desires. These chaplains address patients' religious, spiritual, moral, and ethical problems. They minister to newly admitted, pre-and post-operative patients and those critically ill. Chaplains perform spiritual assessments and clinical pastoral care that are carefully integrated into the holistic care provided by interdisciplinary treatment teams.

Presbyterian ministers seeking to serve the VA must:

- Possess an M.Div. degree.
- Be an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament with at least two years of post-ordination pastoral experience.
- Be in good standing with local presbytery.
- Maintain personal conduct above reproach.
- Complete a minimum of 4 units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and have Board Certification or be able to attain Board Certification within 2 years of hiring.
- Complete an application and gain endorsement with the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies.

The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies application packet can be found on our website (<https://presfedchap.org>).

APPENDIX III: MILITARY CHAPLAINCY: ARMY, NAVY, OR AIR FORCE (ACTIVE DUTY, RESERVE, NATIONAL GUARD)

The military services depend upon all faith groups to provide theologically trained, spiritually motivated, qualified ministers to serve as chaplains to all military branches. These chaplains care for the spiritual well-being of service members and their families regardless of their religious backgrounds, ministering to their needs wherever and whenever needed.

Presbyterian ministers seeking to serve the Military must:

- Be a U.S. Citizen
- Possess an M.Div. degree.
- Be an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament.
For active-duty applications, have at least two years of post-ordination pastoral experience. (Clinical Pastoral Education may satisfy up to one year of pastoral/spiritual experience.)
- Be in good standing with local presbytery.
- Complete an application and gain endorsement with the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies.
- Be able to receive a favorable background check.
- Must meet medical, legal, financial, and moral standards.
- Be physically fit and be able to pass the physical training requirements. (This can include, at a minimum, running from 1.5 to 4 miles, sit-ups and push-ups, and maintaining weight standards for that particular service.)
- Age: (Talk with a recruiter about changes and age waivers)
 - Navy: Must be commissioned before age 42
 - Army: Must be commissioned before age 42 (Active);
and/or before 47 (Guard/Reserve)
 - Air Force: Must be commissioned before age 40

NOTE: Military Service applicants must work with a service-specific chaplain recruiter and complete a military service application.

The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies application packet can be found on our website (<https://presfedchap.org>).

APPENDIX IV: CIVIL AIR PATROL (CAP) CHAPLAINCY

CAP chaplaincy is a voluntary position with the Civil Air Patrol – Air Force Auxiliary. CAP chaplains provide spiritual support to search and rescue crews and participate in character development opportunities for youth.

Presbyterian ministers seeking to serve the CAP must:

- Possess an M.Div. degree.
- Be an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament with at least two years of post-ordination pastoral experience.
- Be in good standing with local presbytery.
- Maintain personal conduct above reproach.
- Complete an application and gain endorsement with the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies.
- Be able to receive a favorable background check.

NOTE: There is no age limit or physical examination required for CAP chaplaincy.

The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies application packet can be found on our website (<https://presfedchap.org>).

APPENDIX V: CHAPLAIN CANDIDATE (ACTIVE DUTY, RESERVE, NATIONAL GUARD)

Chaplain candidacy is an opportunity for seminary and other professional religious school students to evaluate potential and compatibility for commissioning as a military chaplain. The Chaplain Candidate Program is intended for seminary students, not for ordained clergy, allowing an individual to explore military chaplaincy while still preparing for ministry.

If starting or completing seminary education, an individual can potentially enter the Chaplain Candidate Program. Each service, the Army, Navy, and Air Force, offers similar programs to allow interested individuals to learn about service in the respective branches. Some States also offer a National Guard Chaplain Candidate Program.

Seminary students seeking to serve in the Military must:

- Be enrolled or accepted in an accredited Master of Divinity degree program.
- Be in relationship with a presbytery and under their care and guidance.
- Maintain personal conduct above reproach.
- Complete an application and gain approval process with the Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies.
- Be able to receive a favorable background check.
- Be able to pass a physical exam.
- Be physically fit and be able to pass the physical training requirements. (This can include, at a minimum, running from 1.5 to 4 miles, sit-ups and push-ups, and maintaining weight standards for that particular service.)
- Must meet all medical, legal, financial, and moral standards.
- Age: (Talk with a recruiter about changes and age waivers)
 - Navy: Must be commissioned before age 38
 - Army: Must be commissioned before age 37
 - Air Force: Must be commissioned before age 40

(APPENDIX V: CONTINUED)

Chaplain Candidates receive ecclesiastical approval; this is not the same as ecclesiastical endorsement. Appointment as a military chaplain requires ecclesiastical endorsement applied for at the appropriate time. Applicants must work with a chaplain recruiter from the specific service they are interested in to complete the military side of the process.

NOTE: Applicants must work with a chaplain recruiter from the specific service of interest in order to complete the military side of the process.

- Approval and participation in the Chaplain Candidate Program do not guarantee that an individual will become a Military Chaplain.
- Upon completion of Seminary, individuals interested in military chaplaincy must:
 - Reapply for an Ecclesiastical Endorsement
 - Be ordained by local presbytery
 - Meet the required post-seminary experience requirement
 - Be accepted by the military service they wish to serve.

The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies application packet can be found on our website (<https://presfedchap.org>).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mailing Address:

Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies
4125 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016-2790
(202) 630-6225

Email: info@presfedchap.org.

Website: www.presfedchap.org.

Links:

- Air Force: airforce.com/chaplain/
- Army: goarmy.com/chaplain.html
<https://nationalguard.com/chaplain>
- Navy: navy.com/careers/navy-chaplain
- Veterans Affairs: va.gov/CHAPLAIN/
- Civil Air Patrol: capchaplain.com
- Federal Bureau of Prisons:
bop.gov/jobs/positions/index.jsp?p=Chaplain

The Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies application packet can be found on our website: <https://presfedchap.org>.



Presbyterian Federal Chaplaincies

4125 Nebraska Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20016-2790

(202) 630-6225

info@presfedchap.org

www.presfedchap.org



We are a joint ministry of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America, Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).