

## How Long Does it Take?

For seminarians anticipating ministry in a federal chaplaincy (military, veterans hospital, or prison) it can take up to six years to: graduate seminary, attain ordination, receive specialized training, and complete the requisite two years of pastoral ministry in a local congregation. Those seeking endorsement for civilian hospital, hospice and nursing home ministry, in addition to undergraduate and graduate seminary training, will require two to four units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). In other words, it can take considerable time, effort, and financial resources to qualify for fulltime professional civilian or federal chaplaincy. In limited cases, experience can be substituted for certain training. The



Bureau of Prisons has a maximum age limit of 35 for entry. The military services also have age restrictions for their candidate program and direct commissioning. For those already possessing the necessary educational requirements (BA & M.Div.), and a minimum of two years fulltime congregational ministry experience, the endorsement process may take one to six months to complete the screening and application process. Contact a chaplain recruiter for latest eligibility requirements.

1. An Ecclesiastical Endorser (EA) is a ministry professional, typically ordained, and often a former chaplain, who is recognized, empowered and authorized by a religious group to act on its behalf to screen, interview, and *endorse*, a qualified ministry professional for a specific line of chaplaincy ministry; including the Military, Prisons, Law Enforcement, Fire and Emergency Services, Hospitals, Hospices, Nursing Homes, Campus, Veterans Groups, Motor Sports Clubs, Aids Patients, Wounded Warriors, and other Specialized Ministries. The EA ensures that endorsed chaplains maintain "good standing" in personal, spiritual, professional, moral and ethical areas.
2. CBAmerica, originally known as the Conservative Baptist Association of America (CBA of A), is a church-based network of regional associations. The Director of Chaplaincy, its approved Endorsing Agent, is a member of the CBA National Board and accountable to the same.
3. Licensing of female members for specialized ministries that do not include the role of "elder" is wholeheartedly encouraged and approved. CBAmerica recognizes ordination to be conferred only upon male members of the church. Military chaplaincy requires the pastoral function and role of elder, and is not open to female applicants.



# Ecclesiastical Endorsement

- What it is
- What it is not
- How long it takes

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“As an ecclesiastical endorsing agent<sup>1</sup>, I occasionally receive calls from pastors and prospective seminarians themselves who ask for "credentials" so that they can become "full-fledged chaplains." They often call with a number of mistaken notions. Some have never heard of the term "endorsement." Some think that an ecclesiastical endorsement is the same as *ordination* or perhaps is like a *letter of recommendation*. Many also think that the process of endorsement is a simple, overnight process. In reality, few prospective chaplains, and even fewer pastors, understand just what an ecclesiastical endorsement is, means, and entails.”

Rev. Andy Meverden  
Chaplain, Colonel, US Army Retired  
Director of Chaplaincy

*Simply, an endorsement is the document that makes a "general" minister a very specialized one — a "chaplain."*

### What an Endorsement Is Not.

An ecclesiastical endorsement is not a letter of recommendation. Anyone or any church can write a recommendation. Only recognized ecclesiastical endorsing agencies can *legally endorse*. An ecclesiastical endorsement is not ordination. Only a denomination, faith group, or church has the God-given authority to ordain. CBAmerica<sup>2</sup> respects and recognizes the autonomous authority of its member churches to ordain their clergy. The local church of a prospective chaplain will often call other



affiliated churches together for an “Ordination Council,” comprised of other ordained pastors and clergy, but it is ultimately the local church that recognizes and confers “ordination.” An ordained pastor is not automatically an endorsed chaplain.

### What an Endorsement Is.

An ecclesiastical endorsement is a legal document certifying that an ordained or licensed<sup>3</sup> minister is discerned to be spiritually, physically, emotionally, doctrinally, educationally, and professionally qualified to represent his/her church or faith community in a specialized setting (beyond the local congregation) ministering to all in a religiously diverse context. Simply, an endorsement is the document that makes a "general" minister a very specialized one — a "chaplain."