

Commission on Ministry recommends the adoption of the following criteria for validated ministry:

Validated ministry in the Presbytery of Wabash Valley is established in the following three (3) ways, in conformity with G-2.05:

- Called and installed, validated by usual call process
- Honorably Retired – 299 (AEOD-authorized ecclesiastical occupational designation) – validated by presbytery
- Criteria for validating OTHER ministries – validated ministry (791 –AEOD). When the following criteria are met, the ministry of a previously ordained teaching elder may be validated by the Commission on Ministry:
 - a. chaplain – hospital, military, institution (e.g. assisted living, continuous care, etc.)
 - b. counseling – if the ministry is also
 - i. accredited by a professional organization
 - ii. has an oversight board of directors
 - iii. the ministry is affiliated with a church for oversight and reporting
 - c. educational
 - i. is called to serve as a professor or member of a faculty (644 – AEOD)
 - ii. the ordained person is called into administration and qualifies as 642, 643 - AEOD
 - iii. student (648 – Authorized Ecclesiastical Occupational Designation)/enrolled in a degree program related to ministry
 - d. missionary/fraternal worker (405-AEOD) –with oversight by a board
 - e. under contract/call by a presbytery, synod or the General Assembly
 - f. If the teaching elder is not validated by the above criteria, all the following criteria shall be met:
 - i. demonstrate conformity with the mission of God’s people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture, The Book of Confessions, and the Book of Order of this church;
 - ii. serve and aid others, and enable the ministry of others;
 - iii. give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God’s Word;
 - iv. be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery in addition to any organizations, agencies, and institutions served; and
 - v. include responsible participation in the deliberations, worship, and work of the presbytery and in the life of a congregation of this church or a church in correspondence with the PC(USA) (G-5.0201). [These 5 criteria are taken from *G-2.0503* and the G.A.’s “2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/ Commissions”]
 - g. In all validated ministries the above criterion in “f.v.”, shall always apply. Teaching Elders wishing to be engaged in a validated ministry shall participate in a local congregation and shall attend at least two (2) Assemblies of the presbytery annually.
- A teaching elder who does not meet these criteria may be designated as a member-at-large as long as the teaching elder complies with G-2.0503b and “f.v.” above.
- All Validated Ministries, outside the congregation, are to be reviewed annually by COM.

Endorsement for Specialized Ministry

Teaching elders may be called to many forms of ministry of pastoral care in settings outside of a congregation such as hospitals, prisons, businesses, hospice programs, educational institutions military settings and more. In order to provide a high standard of care, there are a number of professional organizations committed to education and certification for those ministries. Presbyteries also have an important role in ecclesiastical endorsement and validation of ministries.

The presbytery has responsibility serve as pastor and counselor to all teaching elders, including those who are serving as chaplains or in other specialized ministries. Chaplains in hospitals and care centers, in the military, and pastoral counselors, as well as ministers serving in other validated ministries need and deserve pastoral care and expressions of interest in and appreciation for the important service they provide. All are accountable to the presbytery for their ministry, but it may be difficult for them to participate in the same ways as pastors of congregations especially for military chaplains who may be deployed overseas. Presbyteries that actively reach out to utilize the gifts of its specialized ministers are enriched by their gifts and perspective.

Most chaplains and pastoral counselors go through an extensive process of training and professional preparation in order to become certified. Military chaplains have a separate process for ecclesiastical endorsement and training. Ordinarily they are expected to have experience as pastors before serving as chaplains in a military setting.

Ecclesiastical endorsement is an official declaration by the presbytery of membership/care that a person seeking certification as a chaplain or pastoral counselor has the gifts of ministry for this special calling. It is not a statement of competency. **Endorsement is the responsibility of the religious body, while certification is the work of the professional organization.** The following information is intended as a resource. Additional information is available from the professional organizations or from certified chaplains and pastoral counselors serving in each presbytery.

Military Chaplains

Those who offer themselves to serve as military chaplains need to work closely with their presbytery under the guidance of [The Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel](#). Information about this ministry, the qualifications for military chaplaincy and the process for ecclesiastical endorsement are outlined on their [website](#). The PCCMP has been authorized as the endorsing agent on behalf of the PCUSA. They do that in collaboration with presbytery ministry committees. Their Director should be contacted in any matter related to the service of teaching elders serving as military chaplains (active duty or reserve) or being considered for such service. Endorsement is given and may be withdrawn by the PCCMP in consultation with the presbytery.

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Military Chaplains and (USERRA)

Through the Board of Pensions, the PCUSA has agreed to the terms of USERRA (the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act). They include, when the individual returns to service in a PCUSA entity (not necessarily the one he/she departed):

- the continued accrual of seniority and the pay thereof for PCUSA teaching elders (or laity) serving in the military for up to five years,
- the accrual of pension benefits for the same service,
- the guarantee of reemployment upon release from military service.
- Payments to the Board of Pensions are due after the individuals return from military service. The liability falls upon the sending church. This places a burden upon churches and presbyteries to find appropriate service opportunities after return from the military.

For more information about USERRA see the [Board of Pensions website](#).

Pastoral Counselors and Other Types of Chaplains

What follows is information for the presbytery in the process of ecclesiastical endorsement that is a required part of the certification process for pastoral counselors and other types of chaplains.

Ordained ministers and others serving in specialized pastoral ministries are required to provide to their respective professional organizations, evidence of endorsement and validation of their ministries by their faith group. Endorsement and validation of the ministry by the faith group is a requirement for certification and for continuing membership in the professional organization.

The Leadership Team of the Presbyterian Association of Specialized Pastoral Ministries ([PASPM](#)), a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association ([PHEWA](#)), in conjunction with [the Office of Vocation](#), has prepared this information to assist both those persons who are seeking endorsement, certification, and/or validation of a ministry of pastoral care and those presbytery committees that have responsibility for endorsing persons and/or validating ministries of pastoral care.

This information will clarify terminology, summarize standards of the professional certifying bodies, incorporate recent statements of agreements between the professional organizations and the religious endorsing bodies, and encourage support for persons in specialized pastoral ministries.

Terminology

Endorsement - An official declaration by the presbytery, that a person has met its criteria to serve in a ministry of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education.

Certification - The process whereby professional certifying agencies such as [APC](#) (Association of Professional Chaplains [AAPC](#) (American Association of Pastoral Counselors), [ACPE](#) (Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.), [CPSP](#) (College of

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Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy), declare a person to be in compliance with professional standards as delineated by that professional organization.

Validation of ministry - An official declaration by the presbytery, that a particular ministry complies with all of the criteria enumerated in **G-2.0503**.

Description of processes

Endorsement is the work of the faith group; therefore, the professional certifying organizations encourage presbyteries to establish a process for endorsement of persons seeking to enter, and/or persons serving in ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education seeking certification. The professional organizations also encourage these persons to initiate a relationship with their presbytery early in their training so that the presbytery, through its committees, can provide guidance, discernment, and support. The declaration of endorsement addresses the following criteria through a process that might include written papers, interviews, and mutual discernment:

- Personal history
- Statement of faith
- Theological and clinical training
- Letters of reference
- Requirements for ministry
- Good standing and accountability within the faith community
- Ability to work collegially in diverse and pluralistic environments
- Willingness to adhere to a code of ethics prescribed by the institutions served, and by the certifying bodies

A letter of endorsement from the presbytery to the certifying body is continuous unless:

- The applicant has failed to successfully complete the membership or certification process
- There is a change in membership status or level in the professional organization
- There is a change in faith group affiliation, jurisdiction or standing
- The certifying body requests a new letter

(In the case of military chaplains, the PCCMP and presbytery may withdraw endorsement.)

Certification is the process whereby professional certifying agencies such as APC, AAPC, ACPE, and CPSP declare a person to be in compliance with the professional standards as delineated by that professional organization. Certification ordinarily addresses such core standards as:

- Clearly articulated professional standards
- Defined admission standards
- Articulated training standards
- Clinical supervisory responsibility and accountability
- Articulated certification steps and standards

From 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions

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- Code of ethics
- Clearly published fees
- Sustained training and ongoing certification
- Defined disciplinary process
- Continuing professional formation and peer review

Validation is an official declaration by the presbytery that a ministry complies with all of the criteria enumerated in **G-2.0503**: See information later in this section.

Ideas for supporting persons in specialized pastoral ministries

- Supporting healthy and well- prepared persons for such service.
- Recognize them at Presbytery meetings with special attention to the beginnings of service, transitions in ministry, and retirements.
- Communicate often and if possible, visit the place of ministry.
- Ask for regular reports of their work.
- Encourage specialized ministers to serve as local congregations as appropriate and possible.
- Involve persons in specialized pastoral ministries in colleague groups and other learning opportunities.
- Nominate chaplains and counselors to sit on presbytery ministry committees

Professional Organizations

<u>American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)</u> Fairfax, Virginia 703-385-6967	<u>Association of Professional Chaplains (APC)</u> Schaumburg, Illinois 847-240-1014
<u>Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE)</u> Decatur, Georgia 404-320-1472	<u>College of Pastoral Supervision & Psychotherapy (CPSP)</u> New York, New York 212-307-1537
<u>Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel (PCCMP)</u> 4125 Nebraska Avenue, NW Washington, D.C. 20016 Phone: (202) 244-4177	<u>National Institute of Business & Industrial Chaplains (NIBIC)</u> Houston Texas 713-266-2456

The following documents, found on the [Association of Professional Chaplains \(APC\) Web site](#) can be helpful as presbyteries consider the endorsement process:

- Common Code of Professional Ethics
- Common Standards for Professional Chaplaincy
- Professional Chaplaincy: Its Role and Importance in Healthcare.