



# **The Southern Baptist Endorsement Manual for Chaplains:**

## **Policies, Guidelines, and Practices for Chaplains**

Effective January 1, 2026

NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 1

<b>INTRODUCTION TO SBC CHAPLAINCY</b>	<b>1</b>
Mission	1
Vision	1
SBC Chaplaincy Values	2
NAMB Staff Organization	3
Territory	3

## CHAPTER 2

<b>THE SBC CHAPLAINS COMMISSION AND CHAPLAINCY TEAM</b>	<b>4</b>
History of Chaplains Commission	5
Relationship to Southern Baptists	7
Chaplains Commission	7
Chaplaincy Financial Support	8
Affiliations and Partners for SBC Chaplaincy	8

## CHAPTER 3

<b>THE SBC CHAPLAINCY MINISTRY</b>	<b>9</b>
The Context and Nature of Chaplaincy Ministry	9
Chaplaincy Ministry Expectations	10
Regarding Religious Diversity and Complexity	10
Regarding Women in Ministry	11
Regarding Credentials	12
Regarding Institutional Chaplaincy Ministry	12
Regarding Institutional Culture	12

## CHAPTER 4

<b>SBC CHAPLAINCY CATEGORIES</b>	<b>13</b>
Areas of Chaplaincy	13
Community Services	13
Corporate	14
Correctional	14
Disaster Relief	14
Healthcare	14
Military	14
Pastoral Counselors	14
Public Safety	15
Employment Status	15
Professional Organizations	15

## CHAPTER 5

<b>SBC ENDORSEMENT POLICIES AND GUIDELINES</b>	<b>16</b>
Endorsement Defined	16
Reasons for and Benefits of Endorsement	16
Types of Endorsements	18
Basic Qualifications and Requirements for SBC Endorsement	18
General Endorsement Requirements	18
Specific Endorsement Requirements	20
Community Service Chaplain	20
Corporate Chaplain	20
Correctional Chaplain	21
Disaster Relief Chaplain	22
Healthcare Chaplain	22
Military Chaplain	23
Public Safety Chaplain	27
Duration of Endorsements	27
Endorsement Updates	27
Transferring an Endorsement	28

Oversight and Supervision	28
Discipline and Withdrawal of an SBC Endorsement	29
Personnel Policies of the Chaplains Commission	30
Doctrinal Stability	30
Divorce and Remarriage	31

## CHAPTER 6

<b>GENERAL EXPECTATIONS OF SBC CHAPLAINS</b>	<b>32</b>
Personal Ethics	32
Integrity	32
Chaplain Relationships	32
Ministry to All Persons	33
Relationships to Other Faith Groups	33
Recognition of Ministry Limitations	33
Baptism and the Lord's Supper	35
Contact Information	35
Quarterly Reports	35
Chaplaincy Professional Development Training (CPDT)	35
Regional SBC Chaplaincy Training Conferences	36
State Convention or Associational Training	36
SBC Chaplaincy Quarterly Webinars	36
SBC Annual Meeting and Chaplains Reception	36
New Chaplain Orientation	36
Legal Support	37
Privileged and Confidential Communications	37
Liability Insurance	37
Involvement in Professional Chaplaincy Organizations	37

## CHAPTER 7

<b>RESOURCES, SERVICES, AND RETIREMENT RECOGNITION</b>	<b>38</b>
Prayer Support	38
Prayer Requests	38

<i>PrayerConnect</i>	38
<i>Pray for Chaplains</i>	39
Publications	39
<i>Baptist Press</i>	39
<i>OnMission</i>	39
Ministry Program Materials	39
Chaplain Communications	39
NAMB Connection Center	40
NAMB Chaplaincy Website	40
SBC Chaplaincy Team	40
Site Visits by SBC Chaplaincy Team	40
Pastoral Care	40
SBC Chaplaincy Team	41
Chaplaincy Pastoral Care Manager	41
Chaplain Ambassadors	41
Ministry Transition Assistance	42
Tuition Assistance	42
SBC Chaplaincy Retirement Recognition	42
<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: CHAPLAIN ENDORSEMENT PATHWAY</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>48</b>

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO SBC CHAPLAINCY

### Mission

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Chaplaincy Team of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) partners with local Southern Baptist churches, local Southern Baptist associations, and state or regional Southern Baptist conventions, along with various agencies and institutions:

- To endorse the best Southern Baptists called to the chaplaincy ministry for the proclamation of the gospel
- To offer pastoral care and prayer support for endorsed SBC chaplains
- To assist SBC churches with the discovery, development, and deployment of their members called into the chaplaincy ministry
- To enhance the ministry of our chaplains through relevant chaplaincy ministry training
- To assist our churches in their ministry to Southern Baptist chaplains and their families, including ministry transitions
- To engage our pastors and denominational leaders regarding an intentional strategy in support of our chaplains and their families

### Vision

The SBC Chaplaincy Team will endorse the best chaplains called by God to evangelize, disciple, pray for, and provide ministry of presence to individuals in non-church settings.

## **SBC Chaplaincy Values (CHAPSBC)**

The SBC Chaplaincy Team has developed a list of values relevant to individuals serving in the chaplaincy ministry with the expectation that endorsed Southern Baptist Chaplains will consistently follow or adhere to these principles, beliefs, and practices.

### **CALLED to frontline ministry**

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

### **HOPE ADVOCATE for others**

“The Spirit of the Lord God is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Isaiah 61:1-2a)

### **ACCOUNTABILITY to ensure ministry success**

“Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17)

### **PRAYERFUL always**

“Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.” (Ephesians 6:18)

### **SELF-CARE to maintain a balanced, resilient life**

“Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

### **BIBLICALLY FOCUSED worldview**

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

### **CHARACTER forged into Christlikeness**

“An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...” (1 Timothy 3:2)

## **NAMB Staff Organization**

The organizational structure of NAMB is designed to support four primary tasks: evangelism, church planting, chaplaincy, and compassion ministry.

Presently, there are six groups that form the basic organizational structure of NAMB: Send Network, Send Relief, Evangelism, Chaplaincy, Support Operations, and the President's Office. Within each group, there are teams, and within each team, there may be units. The SBC Chaplaincy Team is assigned to the NAMB President's Office for administrative purposes. Chaplaincy Team personnel are selected through an administrative process and serve for an indefinite period.

## **Territory**

NAMB's geographical area of ministry responsibility includes the United States, the territories of the United States, and Canada. The Chaplains Commission, comprised of NAMB trustees appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention, will endorse chaplains to institutions within these geographic areas. However, chaplains may find themselves serving throughout the world through their employment with an institution whose territory is worldwide (e.g., military chaplaincy).

# CHAPTER 2

## THE SBC CHAPLAINS COMMISSION AND CHAPLAINCY TEAM

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is a cooperative group of local Baptist churches that have joined together “to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians, for the propagation of the gospel, any law, usage, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.”<sup>1</sup> In 1941, the SBC directed the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board) to establish the Chaplains Commission as the primary executive agency for approving Southern Baptists seeking endorsement to serve as Southern Baptist chaplains. A growing number of institutions with chaplaincy programs, including the federal government, require an endorsement document from a recognized faith group or denomination.

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) was founded in 1998 through a restructuring that combined the Brotherhood Commission, the Radio and Television Commission, and the Home Mission Board. The SBC Chaplaincy Team is organized within the President’s Office of NAMB. The mission, vision, and guiding principles of the Chaplaincy Team are derived from the mission and vision assigned to NAMB by the SBC.

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<sup>1</sup>*SBC’s Charter, Constitution, and Bylaws*, December 27, 1845, accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.sbc.net/about/what-we-do/legal-documentation/constitution>.

## History of Chaplains Commission

Southern Baptist involvement in chaplaincy ministries dates back to 1847 when the pastor of a Hampton, Virginia Baptist church was called to serve as the chaplain of the University of Virginia. Further involvement came during the Civil War as pastors and churches ministered and evangelized among the Confederate troops. Minutes recorded from the SBC in 1863 demonstrate the support a chaplaincy ministry among military forces. Religious work was carried on among soldiers in a number of states. At the close of the war, the Domestic Mission Board of the SBC reported, "This has been a prolific field of ministerial effort. It would be gratifying to all the friends of Jesus to read the many letters we have received from chaplains and missionaries employed among the soldiers of the armies . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Southern Baptist ministers continued to respond to the call for military chaplains as they were recruited by the military. As World War I began, the following is found in minutes recorded from the SBC in 1917:

As the country is now greatly increasing its military, naval, and aviation forces and will probably continue to increase them for some time, it is plain that the services of many ministers will be needed in the chaplaincy. The Home Mission Board is instructed to use its best endeavors to stimulate and cultivate the interest of our people in this matter and to care for the interests of the denomination as may be necessary. The co-operation of the State Boards is also earnestly requested in the task of finding and recommending men suited to this responsible work.<sup>3</sup>

During the intervening years between World War I and II, the SBC sought to engage in military chaplaincy ministry through the work of the Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains. This committee was appointed by the SBC Executive Committee and was located in Washington, D.C. Just prior to United States' entry into World War II, the Executive Committee recommended to the SBC that the responsibility for endorsement of chaplains be designated to the Home Mission Board (HMB). The action of the messengers at the convention reads:

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<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention 1866, Russellville, KY, May 22-26, 1866* (Richmond: Dispatch Steam Presses, 1866), 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1917, New Orleans, May 16-21, 1917* (Nashville: Marshall & Bruce Co, 1917), 101.

We further recommend that the Southern Baptist Convention make direct contact with the government in the appointment of chaplains from our denomination and that the Home Mission Board be designated as an agent to make this contact through a duly appointed representative, in fullest cooperation with other religious bodies, and, further, that all recommendations and endorsements for chaplains from the Southern Baptist Convention be made by the Home Mission Board to the government.

Wishing to maintain the most fraternal and co-operative relationship with the other evangelical bodies, the SBC shall through its Committee appointed by the Home Mission Board retain its membership on the General Commission of Army and Navy Chaplains, provided the General Commission on Army and Navy Chaplains shall continue to exercise its autonomy. Should the General Commission lose its autonomy, then the Committee appointed by the Home Board shall be instructed to seek a consultative membership on the General Commission of Army and Navy Chaplains.<sup>4</sup>

Following this meeting, the HMB established a committee to handle the endorsement function of the Board. This committee retained the name “Committee” on Army and Navy chaplains. Dr. Alfred Carpenter, pastor in Blytheville, Arkansas, became the first “superintendent” for the work of chaplaincy.

A recommendation was presented and adopted at the SBC in 1949 to formally give the title and authority to the Chaplains Commission, SBC, of the Southern Baptist Convention:

That for the sake of clarity the Convention change its terminology and that the Convention recognize the Chaplains Commission, SBC, established by the Home Mission Board, as having all of the powers and responsibilities committed to the Chaplains Committee by the Convention in 1941 as follows:

We recognize the right of this Commission to designate itself as the Chaplains Commission, SBC, of the Southern Baptist Convention.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1941, Birmingham, AL, May 14-18, 1941* (Nashville: Executive Committee, SBC 1941), 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1949, Oklahoma City, OK, May 18-22, 1949* (Nashville: Executive Committee, SBC 1949), 39-40.

## **Relationship to Southern Baptists**

The SBC Chaplains Commission derives its charter and mission from the executive action voted on by the messengers of the 1941 Annual Southern Baptist Convention in Birmingham, Alabama. Today, trustees elected by the SBC to serve on the North American Mission Board are appointed by the chairman of the NAMB Board of Trustees to serve on the Chaplains Commission.

The Chaplaincy Team is organizationally a pillar of NAMB and provides support and training to endorsed Southern Baptist chaplains under NAMB's organizational processes. The SBC Chaplaincy Team provides policies and guidelines for the endorsement and support of SBC chaplains to the Chaplain Commission for approval.

The ministry of chaplains is supported by Southern Baptists through a network of individuals that includes NAMB, the Chaplains Commission, the SBC Chaplaincy Team, Chaplain Ambassadors, state/regional convention chaplaincy representatives, local associations, and local churches. The connection among these persons provides for ongoing pastoral support, encouragement, mentoring, and promotion of chaplaincy.

## **Chaplains Commission**

Trustees of NAMB are elected for their term of service by the SBC in its annual session. Trustees determine operating policies and give overall strategic direction in matters pertaining to NAMB's ministry and obligations.

The Chaplains Commission is a standing committee of the NAMB Board of Trustees. Trustees are appointed by the Board Officers of the NAMB Board to serve three years on the Chaplains Commission. Ex-officio (nonvoting) members include the Chairman of NAMB Board of Trustees and the NAMB President. The Chaplains Commission administers SBC chaplain endorsements and provides advisement to the SBC Chaplaincy Team regarding the endorsement process.

The Chaplains Commission meets approximately five times each year, or as required. The specific dates are determined annually by the Chaplaincy Team in consultation with the Chaplains Commission.

## Chaplaincy Financial Support

NAMB funds are derived from generous giving through the Cooperative Program, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering® (AAEO), and other designated contributions. SBC-endorsed chaplains are not paid by NAMB, nor do they receive funding from the AAEO. Chaplaincy training funds are provided through the NAMB operating budget. Individuals can contribute to the chaplaincy ministry through NAMB ([namb.net/give](https://namb.net/give)). Additional financial support for military chaplaincy is derived from offerings received from military chapel designated offerings. These funds are accounted for through the “Military Chaplains Fund.” The Alfred Carpenter Scholarship Fund, which supports advanced theological education for chaplains, is supported by designated donations and annuities.

## Affiliations and Partners for SBC Chaplaincy

The SBC Chaplaincy Team, under the advisement and approval of senior NAMB leadership, maintains affiliation and partners with several faith-based organizations involved with the promotion, facilitation, and development of the chaplaincy ministry. The Chaplaincy Team also associates with several institutions and organizations supporting the education and professional development of persons serving in chaplaincy. The Chaplaincy Team also relates to a number of institutions and organizations supporting the education and professional development of persons serving in chaplaincy.

# CHAPTER 3

## THE SBC CHAPLAINCY MINISTRY

### The Context and Nature of Chaplaincy Ministry

Chaplains are Christian leaders called by God to minister to people outside the walls of the church in the environment of a particular institution or organization. The Chaplaincy ministry occurs under the authority of the local church as stated in Article VI of *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.<sup>6</sup> A Southern Baptist who is endorsed to the chaplaincy ministry must clearly understand that the context of chaplaincy is beyond the ministry environment of a local church setting and very often in a pluralistic and diverse setting. Chaplains are normally employees or volunteers of an institution providing ministry to their clients, employees, and families. The Chaplaincy affords men and women unique opportunities for ministry. The office of pastor is associated with the local church, while the chaplain, a member in good standing with a local SBC church, represents his or her church in specialized ministry settings. This change of context is a significant point of education for the new chaplain, especially if they are coming from a church-based ministry setting. The following points should help better understand the chaplaincy ministry.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, Article VI “The Church,” accessed December 3, 2025, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#vi-the-church>.

## Chaplaincy Ministry Expectations

Tremendous insights can be gained from Jesus' example as He lived on earth. As the life of Jesus reveals, all people are to be treated with compassion, dignity, and respect. When Jesus was asked about the greatest command in the law, His response was relational: "He said to him, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt. 22:37-39). Chaplains are in the people-care business. When people provide care to others, they provide it unto God. Jesus gives assurance that whatever a person does "for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me" (Matt. 25:40). Considering that every person in the world matters to God, everyone should matter to us and be treated with love, compassion, dignity, and respect.

## Regarding Religious Diversity and Complexity

SBC chaplains are expected to follow doctrine and practice as stated in [\*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000\*](#). Chaplaincy ministry is unique because it serves everyone within the institution. For example, a military chaplain ministers to every member of his assigned military unit, including authorized Department of Defense employees and their respective family members. A healthcare chaplain ministers to patients, patients' families, and staff members. A correctional facility chaplain ministers to staff, inmates, and their families. Those served include all persons who seek the chaplain's services, including those who have no religious preference or belief. The focus is not simply on those who respond to the chaplain's presence, but to everyone within the chaplain's sphere of ministry. Every chaplain is expected to support the free exercise of religion toward all within their assigned agency or institution. This contextual focus provides chaplains with endless opportunities to be witnesses of the gospel to every person, whether he or she expresses a personal faith preference or has none.

Many institutions (e.g., a military service, prison system, or healthcare facility) that host chaplaincy programs employ or provide services to people who are affiliated or claim association with a wide variety of faith groups. The chaplain is expected to perform or advise religious ministry to all, regardless of their faith group, as well as those of the chaplain's particular faith group. Most institutions expect the chaplain to facilitate the free exercise of religion within their organization. Simply stated, the chaplain is to ensure that all persons have access to the appropriate exercise or expression of their chosen faith group. As the Southern Baptist

chaplain accomplishes this religious task, the chaplain also is free to minister to those of the chaplain's faith group (i.e., Southern Baptist).

The chaplain may be expected to facilitate access to religious practices with which the chaplain may have a theological disagreement. The United States Constitution fully protects the chaplain from being compelled to violate his or her own conscience or the requirements of his or her faith.<sup>7</sup> However, these rights cannot be taken for granted. Chaplains must regularly educate their institutional leadership and members on the freedom of religion, as well as all religious matters. They must also be prepared to defend those within their institution, including their own religious beliefs and practices, whose freedom of religion is violated, challenged, or restrained by superiors who do not understand them.

Chaplains are expected to perform or facilitate religious support for individuals within their respective institutional setting. When responding to requests for religious services, chaplains must not violate their religious conscience or the tenets of their faith, beliefs, and practices as stated in [\*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000\*](#). In such cases, chaplains will contact another chaplain within their organization to provide the requested religious support. If no one is available within the institution or organization, the chaplain can assist the individual in finding religious support within the local community. Facilitating religious practice should be within the confines of the policies of the institution.

Questions or concerns about the utilization of Southern Baptist-endorsed chaplains should be referred to the SBC Chaplaincy Team at the North American Mission Board, by contacting 800-634-2462 or [chaplains@namb.net](mailto:chaplains@namb.net).

## Regarding Women in Ministry

The Chaplains Commission and the SBC Chaplaincy Team supports the statement regarding the pastorate in Article VI of [\*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000\*](#).<sup>8</sup> Every follower of Jesus Christ has unique spiritual gifts according to the grace of God (Rom. 12:6). However, the New Testament

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<sup>7</sup> For more information regarding a chaplain's religious freedoms, please become familiar with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

<sup>8</sup> *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, Article VI "The Church", accessed December 3, 2025, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#vi-the-church>.

as a whole upholds restrictions on the ministry of women, barring them from teaching men or having authority over them (1 Tim. 2:12). Nevertheless, the Bible reveals the significant role of women in the ministry. We encourage the ministry of women in all aspects of the chaplaincy other than those pastoral leadership roles requiring ordination.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, per SBC Referral 3 of the 2002 Southern Baptist Convention, the Chaplains Commission is committed to endorse chaplains, both men and women, in keeping with the teaching of the Word of God and based on [\*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000\*](#). However, we will refrain from endorsing ordained women to the office of chaplain.<sup>10</sup>

## Regarding Credentials

The terms licensed, commissioned, or ordained describe the procedures followed by local churches or denominations to vest ministerial status upon qualified individuals. Each ministerial status has specific legal and ecclesiastical provisions. Chaplains need to understand which ministry status has been given to them by their SBC home church.

## Regarding Institutional Chaplaincy Ministry

SBC chaplains serve in a variety of institutional structures. Hiring, assigning, reassigning, and dismissing of the chaplain is the prerogative of the organization. Additionally, compensation and programming funds come from the institution for which the chaplain works.

## Regarding Institutional Culture

As the new chaplain learns about the structure and policies of the organization he or she serves, he or she also will want to pay attention to the culture these structures and policies create. For example, a warden is tasked to run a correctional facility. That facility takes on a culture that results from the warden's policies and the attitudes those policies engender throughout the institution. A particular military command has a culture developed around its mission and the leadership of the command. Chaplains must pay close attention to the culture that exists within their specialized ministry setting while, at the same time, maintaining their pastoral identity.

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<sup>9</sup> *Resolution on Ordination and the Role of Women In Ministry*, Kansas City, MO 1984, accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-ordination-and-the-role-of-women-in-ministry/>.

<sup>10</sup> *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 2002*, St. Louis, MO, June 11-12, 2002 (Nashville: Executive Committee, SBC 2002), 208.

# CHAPTER 4

## SBC CHAPLAINCY CATEGORIES

Southern Baptist Chaplains are recognized Baptist Christian leaders sent forth from the local church to serve as an extension of Christ's ministry to all people. The employing institutions normally establish the minimum requirements for their chaplains. Some organizations have strict educational and training requirements, while others may appoint a dedicated employee with little or no formal theological training to the "extra" duty of serving as the chaplain for their organization. In all situations, the chaplain is expected to perform in a professional and dedicated manner.

### Areas of Chaplaincy

Chaplaincy occurs in a wide variety of specialized settings. Presently, the Chaplains Commission of the North American Mission Board endorses chaplains to the following categories: community services, corporate, correctional, disaster relief, healthcare, military, pastoral counselors, and public safety.

### Community Services

Community service chaplains provide Christian ministry outside the walls of the church, often in collaboration with volunteer agencies, in support of individuals, families, businesses, corporations, schools, and groups in the local community.

## Corporate

These chaplains often provide ministry at industrial settings, manufacturing sites, business offices, corporate headquarters, and community settings. The chaplains may be hired by a particular corporation or business to work as an employee of that organization or on a contractual basis. Marketplace Chaplains and Corporate Chaplains of America are two agencies that place chaplains in corporate settings on a contractual agreement.

## Correctional

Chaplains for incarcerated persons are involved in prisons and jails at all levels of the government (federal, state, county, and city) and with private corrections companies. Institutional chaplains serve in both adult and juvenile facilities.

## Disaster Relief

Disaster relief chaplains extend the witness and care of the church to people whose lives have been unexpectedly interrupted.

## Healthcare

While hospital settings are the usual place for healthcare chaplaincy, Southern Baptists also have chaplains serving with hospice organizations, mental health facilities, special needs programs, nursing homes, and with the Department of Veterans Affairs. This area of service also includes an endorsement for Clinical Pastoral Education residency students.

## Military

The United States Army, Navy, and Air Force have a corps of chaplains who provide chaplaincy ministry. These chaplains and staff officers serve on active duty or in a capacity as a Reserve or Guard chaplain. Military chaplains also include the volunteer chaplains of the Civil Air Patrol, the Air Force auxiliary service, and Auxiliary Clergy Support of the Coast Guard. Additionally, some states may have a militia or state Defense Force.

## Pastoral Counselors

In 1985, the SBC adopted Recommendation 11 to task the Chaplains Commission with the endorsement responsibilities for Southern Baptists involved in pastoral counseling ministries.<sup>11</sup> Pastoral Counselors are a

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<sup>11</sup> *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 1985, Dallas, TX, June 11-13, 1985 (Nashville: Executive Committee, SBC 1985), 58.*

small segment of the chaplain professionals endorsed by the SBC. The SBC Chaplaincy Team supports endorsement of pastoral counselors when required by the institution or certifying organization. We do not provide certification or licensing for pastoral counselors.

## **Public Safety**

Law enforcement and fire departments have chaplains who serve the members of the department as well as the people of the community.

## **Employment Status**

Chaplains serve under a variety of arrangements with the organizations that invite the chaplain into the organization. Employment may be on a full-time basis with numerous employment benefits attached to the compensation for service. Employment also may be on a part-time or volunteer basis.

Employment status is an arrangement between the chaplain and the organization being served. NAMB does not have a policy for providing compensation for chaplaincy services. The Chaplains Commission and the SBC Chaplaincy Team are not organized or tasked to create or provide employment opportunities for chaplaincy.

## **Professional Organizations**

Various professional organizations require endorsements for membership and/or certification. For chaplains seeking membership in these organizations, they must initiate a separate endorsement application.

# CHAPTER 5

## SBC ENDORSEMENT POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

### Endorsement Defined

Endorsement, as used by the Chaplains Commission, is an official statement that affirms to an institution or certifying organization that the chaplain is a called and qualified Christian leader who is an active member in good standing with a local church of the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>12</sup>

An endorsement is for a specific chaplaincy with a specific institution or certifying organization. It is the chaplain's responsibility to ensure that he or she has a current endorsement on file with his or her institution. Southern Baptist chaplains must understand and comply with the endorsement requirements of this manual, as well as any additional policies or guidelines issued by the SBC or NAMB.

### Reasons for and Benefits of Endorsement

Most employing institutions require an ecclesiastical endorsement as a condition of employment. An endorsement by the SBC affirms that the individual is a minister in good standing with Southern Baptists. Some organizations may not require an endorsement, but the individual serving as a chaplain may request an endorsement. Even though the

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<sup>12</sup> See [Appendix A](#), "Chaplain Endorsement Pathway," for an overview of the endorsement process.

endorsement is not required, it communicates to the employer that the SBC recognizes the chaplain as a minister. The endorsement also establishes a relationship with the SBC Chaplaincy Team. It is the goal of the Chaplaincy Team to maintain a pastoral relationship with all endorsed chaplains. This is done through chaplaincy training events, phone calls, personal correspondence, social media, Chaplain Ambassador contacts, and by SBC Endorser visits.

The primary reason most people seek ecclesiastical endorsement is because it is required by most institutions. However, there are many other reasons and benefits for seeking endorsement:

1. Clarifies one's calling to chaplaincy ministry through participation in the application process
2. Provides a tangible affirmation of your chaplaincy calling by 12.7 million SBC members and more than 46,000 SBC churches
3. Offers mentoring opportunities and support network with other SBC chaplains
4. Provides regional professional development training for chaplains each year
5. Offers pastoral care through the NAMB Chaplain Ambassador program
6. Offers prayer support from the SBC Chaplaincy Team, NAMB, and Southern Baptists
7. Provides field guidance as needed on current issues chaplains are facing in their ministry setting
8. Offers eligibility for tangible benefits from various SBC theological institutions and entities
9. Provides a theological base from a recognized denomination upon which you can perform or provide spiritual care and rituals in your ministry setting
10. Protects an institution by only having properly vetted and qualified SBC chaplains

## Types of Endorsements

The Chaplains Commission provides four types of endorsement.

- Vocational chaplain
- Volunteer chaplain
- Chaplain in Clinical Pastoral Education Training
- Professional membership

Vocational endorsements are for chaplains serving in paid roles, whether full-time or part-time (for military chaplains, this includes active or reserve components). Volunteer endorsements are for chaplains serving in unpaid roles. The third type of endorsement is for chaplains involved in supervised programs such as the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), the Institute for Pastoral Training (ICPT), and Clinical Pastoral Education International (CPEI), or similar programs and ministry training centers. Lastly, Professional Membership endorsements are for chaplains whose professional organizations—like the Association of Professional Chaplains—require an official ecclesiastical endorsement for membership.

Chaplains can have more than one endorsement if an individual is actively serving as a recognized chaplain in respective institutions.

## Basic Qualifications and Requirements for SBC Endorsement

The Chaplains Commission of the North American Mission Board endorses chaplains to the following categories: community services, corporate, corrections, disaster relief, healthcare, military, pastoral counselors, and public safety.

### General Endorsement Requirements

The following are the minimum requirements for SBC endorsement:

- Demonstrate the call, competence, and character for ministry as a chaplain.
  - > The applicant must demonstrate a call to the ministry. This involves not only the written communication, but actions showing a personal commitment to Christian ministry.
  - > The applicant must have proven character in line with his or her call to chaplain ministry. Chaplains are expected to live their personal and professional lives with the highest practice

of integrity in accordance with the *NAMB Code of Conduct and Covenant of Support*. A chaplain's personal character must be consistent with the spiritual leadership required to work with people.

- The applicant must undergo a background check that includes credit, criminal, and sexual offenses.
- Be a member in good standing with an SBC church for a minimum of one year. All endorsed chaplains are expected to maintain membership in a Southern Baptist church and develop an accountability relationship with a Southern Baptist church. This accountability should relate to the chaplain's personal life, as well as his or her exercise of ministry in his or her ministry context.
- Submit references, including one from applicant's SBC Pastor, ministerial staff, or Director of Missions/Associational Mission Strategist.
- For vocational chaplains, be licensed, commissioned, or ordained by an SBC church or church of like faith recognized by the applicant's current SBC church. This recognizes the role of the local church in affirming the ministry of the applicant.
- Hold theological beliefs currently adopted by the SBC as represented in [\*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000\*](#). Additionally, applicants and endorsed chaplains are to affirm compliance and support of the following policies:
  - If divorced, the applicant will be assessed with grace and mercy on an individual basis in accordance with NAMB policy.<sup>13</sup>
  - The applicant must agree to the *NAMB Code of Conduct and Covenant of Support*.
- Vocational chaplains should have accredited theological training consistent with their projected ministry assignment. A Master of Divinity degree or equivalent is often required for vocational chaplains.
- Volunteer chaplains are expected to be actively engaged in chaplain-specific training.
  - Meet requirements of employing agency, institution, or professional organization. The Chaplain Commission will not endorse a chaplain who does not meet the requirements of these agencies or organizations.
- Must receive approval from the Chaplains Commission.

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<sup>13</sup> For specific details, see *Chaplaincy Endorsement Manual*, "Divorce and Remarriage," 31.

All chaplain endorsements are to a specific ministry position. Any change in that position will require an update or additional endorsement. It is the responsibility of the chaplain to initiate the process for updating an endorsement. After notifying the SBC Chaplaincy Team, at least six weeks should be allowed for the update endorsement process.

Any exception to these basic qualifications and requirements must be approved by the Chaplains Commission.

## Specific Endorsement Requirements

### Community Service Chaplain

Community Service Chaplains provide Christian ministry outside the walls of the church, often in collaboration with volunteer agencies, in support of individuals, families, businesses, corporations, schools, and groups in the local community. Though not exhaustive, some examples may include pastoral counselors, life coaches, motorcycle chaplains, resort chaplains, sports chaplains, civic groups, and campus chaplains.

A denominational endorsement may be required if the institution or organization recognizes a person serving as a chaplain. SBC General Endorsement Requirements, as well as additional standards established by the community service organization, will be required for persons seeking SBC chaplaincy endorsement.

### Corporate Chaplain

Corporate chaplains often provide ministry at industrial settings, manufacturing sites, business offices, and corporate headquarters. Some businesses may internally hire an employee to serve as a chaplain of that organization. A few chaplaincy service ministries provide chaplains on a contractual basis to various corporate and business settings.

In addition to SBC General Endorsement Requirements, corporate chaplains should have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in Biblical Studies from an accredited college or university, Master of Divinity preferred, and a minimum of seven years of full-time work experience. A business degree can reduce this requirement. Most corporate chaplaincy organizations provide their training. Corporate settings often expect specialized training to deal with suicide prevention, marriage enrichment, resiliency, and other situations.

## Correctional Chaplain

Chaplains for incarcerated persons are involved in prisons and jails at all levels of the government (federal, state, county, and city) and with private corrections companies. Correctional chaplains serve in adult and juvenile facilities.

In addition to SBC General Endorsement Requirements, the minimum qualifications of correctional chaplains vary according to the type of confinement facility and state.

*Local and County Facilities:* Chaplains at local confinement facilities are usually volunteers. The local facilities set their requirements, which are often minimal. Formal accredited theological education and ordination are often not required. A background check is expected. Those desiring to provide ministry in these situations should consult with local authorities for requirements.

*State Facilities:* Most chaplains at state prisons are required to have a theological degree. Contact your state facility for specific educational requirements. Experience often is credited for some educational requirements. After employment, two units of Clinical Pastoral Education may be required for promotion.

*U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons:* Requirements for those desiring to work at federal correction facilities are more comprehensive:

- Ordained minister by or recognized by an SBC Church
- Valid SBC endorsement
- The normal age limit to apply is 37 (Exceptions are made based on experience)
- United States citizenship
- Undergraduate degree from an accredited institution
- Master of Divinity or Theology degree or the equivalent education from an American Theological School (ATS) accredited residential seminary or school of theology: 20 graduate hours of theology; 20 graduate hours of sacred writings; 20 graduate hours of church history or comparative religions; and 20 graduate hours of ministry courses
- At least 2 years of autonomous experience as a religious/spiritual

leader in a church or specialized ministry setting (Clinical Pastoral Education may satisfy up to one year of experience)

- Pass a background investigation
- Pass physical requirements and examination by the Federal Bureau of Prisons

### **Disaster Relief Chaplain**

Disaster Relief (DR) chaplains are volunteer members of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief teams. They are mobilized with their SBC state convention disaster relief team by the state disaster relief coordinator. The DR chaplain provides ministry both to the deploying disaster response team and to the survivors of the disaster. For this reason, the training requirements for endorsement as a disaster relief chaplain are set high. Ministry opportunities include providing devotionals for the team, assisting with personal crisis of team members, and praying with and providing emotional support to disaster survivors.

Disaster relief training is coordinated and scheduled by each Southern Baptist state convention through the office of the disaster relief coordinator or state chaplaincy representative. This training often includes:

- Introduction to Southern Baptist Disaster Relief
- Specialized Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training

For SBC endorsement, disaster relief chaplains should also meet the SBC General Endorsement Requirements, as well as the following training:

- Complete the “Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Chaplains Manual” training (9 hours)
- Complete one unit of training in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) (14 hours), **or** Complete Operational Stress First Aid course (7 hours)
- Minimum of at least one state disaster relief callout

### **Healthcare Chaplain**

While hospital settings are the usual place for healthcare chaplaincy, Southern Baptists also have chaplains serving with hospice organizations, mental health facilities, special needs programs, nursing homes, and with the Department of Veterans Affairs. This area of service also includes an endorsement for Clinical Pastoral Education residency students.

In addition to SBC General Endorsement Requirements, healthcare chaplains should have an accredited Master of Divinity degree and at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Care Education (CPE). Staff chaplain positions normally require four units of CPE. Pastoral experience depends on what is required by the hiring healthcare organization. Specialized positions in healthcare require more training.

#### *Veterans Affairs Chaplain Requirements:*

- Valid SBC endorsement
- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution
- Master of Divinity or equivalent degree of at least 70 hours of graduate courses, including the following: 20 semester hours in pastoral ministry; 20 semester hours in any combination of theology, ethics, and philosophy of religion; 20 semester hours in the study of sacred writings, including the study of languages in which sacred writings are/were written; and 10 semester hours in religious history and/or world religions from an accredited institution
- United States citizenship
- Four Units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) from a Department of Education (DOE) accredited CPE Program
  - There are no substitutions for the 4 DOE accredited CPE units. Board Certification as a Chaplain—being “BCC” from a 501(c)3 board certifying body which requires ecclesiastical endorsement is required for permanent employment as a GS-11 Chaplain. (A person can be hired temporarily as a GS-9 without board certification, and the person has two years to become a board-certified chaplain. When becoming a board-certified chaplain, the person then becomes a permanent GS-11 Chaplain.)

#### **Military Chaplain**

The United States Army, Navy, and Air Force have a corps of chaplains who provide chaplaincy ministry. These chaplains and staff officers serve on active duty or in a capacity as a Reserve or Guard chaplain. This area also includes the volunteer chaplains of the Civil Air Patrol, an Air Force auxiliary service, and Auxiliary Clergy Support of the Coast Guard. Additionally, some states may have a militia or state Defense Force.

Below are the general requirements for Armed Services Chaplaincy. Please consult the specific chaplain branch recruiter for the latest military requirements.

One of the mandatory requirements for Military Chaplaincy endorsement is Professional Ministry Experience (PME). The PME for each Branch and component is described in [Appendix B](#).

#### **U.S. Army Chaplain Requirements (Active Duty, Army Reserve, and Army Guard):**

- Ordained minister of or recognized by an SBC church
- Valid SBC endorsement
- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution
- Master of Divinity/Theology degree of at least 72 hours from an accredited institution
- United States citizenship (Permanent residents can apply for U.S. Army Reserve only)
- Pass the National Agency Check for a security clearance
- Pass Armed Forces physical exam
- Two years of pastoral experience within a congregational setting

#### **For U.S. Army Chaplain Candidate Program:**

- Be a full-time graduate student at an accredited seminary or theological school
- Be between 18-36 years of age at the time of commissioning
- Able to secure an endorsement
- Pass a military physical exam
- U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- Pass a national agency security clearance
- Ordination is not required

#### **U.S. Air Force Chaplain Requirements (Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard):**

- Ordained minister of or recognized by an SBC church
- Valid SBC endorsement

- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution
- Master of Divinity/Theology degree of at least 72 hours from an accredited institution
- United States citizenship
- Pass the National Agency Check for a security clearance
- Pass Armed Forces physical exam
- Two years of pastoral experience within a congregational setting

#### **For U.S. Air Force Chaplain Candidate Program:**

- Be a full-time graduate student at an accredited seminary or theological school
- Less than 35 years of age at the time of appointment
- Able to secure an endorsement
- Pass a military physical exam
- U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- Pass a national agency security clearance
- Ordination is not required

#### **U.S. Navy Chaplain Requirements (Active Duty and Reserve):**

- Ordained minister of or recognized by an SBC church
- Valid SBC endorsement
- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution
- Master of Divinity/Theology degree of at least 72 hours from an accredited institution
- United States citizenship
- Pass the National Agency Check for a security clearance
- Pass Armed Forces physical exam
- Pass a Navy physical fitness test
- Two years pastoral experience within a congregational setting

#### **For U.S. Navy Chaplain Candidate Program:**

- Be a full-time graduate student at an accredited seminary or theological school
- Be 21 years of age and able to complete 20 years
- Able to secure an endorsement
- Pass a military physical exam
- U.S. citizen or permanent resident
- Pass a national agency security clearance
- Ordination is not required

#### **Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Chaplain Requirements:**

- Ordained minister of or recognized by an SBC church
- Valid SBC endorsement
- Undergraduate degree of 120 semester hours from an accredited institution
- Master of Divinity/Theology degree of at least 72 hours from an accredited institution (Clergy without accredited graduate degree may ask for a waiver providing they have a minimum of five years full-time pastoral experience)
- Two years pastoral experience within a congregation setting
- Meet CAP Senior Membership requirements
- A Fingerprint card and background check
- Pay CAP national and wing dues
- Contact your wing chaplain for an application (CAP Form 35)

#### **Coast Guard Auxiliary Clergy Support:**

The Auxiliary Clergy Support program supplements and supports Navy Chaplains serving with the Coast Guard by expanding religious ministry within the Coast Guard to better meet the needs of Coast Guard members and their families.

- Ordained minister of or recognized by an SBC church
- Be a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary
- Must meet many of the same qualifications as members of the Navy Chaplain Corps

## Public Safety Chaplain

Law enforcement and fire departments have chaplains who serve the members of the department, as well as the people of the community. In addition to SBC General Endorsement Requirements, Public Safety chaplains in the following positions are encouraged to seek further theological and crisis intervention training.

*Law Enforcement Chaplains:* Each law enforcement agency establishes its own requirements for chaplains. The International Conference of Police Chaplains gives recommended standards for police chaplains. Those desiring to be law enforcement chaplains must consult with individual agencies for qualifications and method of application for positions.

*Fire Department Chaplains:* Each fire department establishes its own requirements for chaplains. The Federation of Fire Chaplains brings together individuals and groups interested in providing effective chaplaincies for fire service organizations. Anyone interested in serving as a fire department chaplain must consult with the individual fire departments for their requirements.

## Duration of Endorsements

An SBC Chaplaincy endorsement is to a specific chaplain ministry position. Any change in chaplain status or employment requires an update of endorsement. Some ministerial training programs, such as a clinical pastoral education residency, have a specified duration. When the chaplain completes the training, the endorsement terminates. Certain endorsements have a specified time for which they are valid. This termination date is usually stated on the endorsement and/or is expressed by the institution's policy. If an endorsement is no longer required, the endorsement will terminate until an update is requested. A chaplain may request the withdrawal of endorsement at any time. A chaplain may lose his or her endorsement at any time due to circumstances such as doctrinal stance, moral failure, or other substantial issues.

All endorsements terminate when the chaplain is no longer affiliated with the organization to which he or she was endorsed and/or the chaplain no longer meets the SBC requirements for endorsement.

## Endorsement Updates

Periodically, the institution will ask that the chaplain have an updated endorsement. It is the responsibility of the chaplain to initiate the process

for updating an endorsement. Also, a chaplain should contact the SBC Chaplaincy Team to request an endorsement update when his or her status or ministry location changes. Endorsement update requests can be made through the chaplain's portal ([mynamb.net](https://mynamb.net)).

Chaplains can have more than one endorsement if an individual is actively serving as a recognized chaplain in respective institutions.

Chaplains can request an update by contacting the SBC Chaplaincy Team or through the Chaplain portal at [mynamb.net](https://mynamb.net). Once started, the chaplain will need to complete an Endorsement Update Application and send proper supporting documents. When requesting an updated endorsement, chaplains are to ensure their current profile, SBC church membership, pastoral reference, and Quarterly Report is current. When a chaplain requests an update to a vocational endorsement from a volunteer endorsement, the basic requirements/guidelines for that chaplaincy category and status applies. Please allow up to six weeks for the endorsement update process to be completed.

## **Transferring an Endorsement**

A chaplain can only be endorsed through one endorsing body. However, a chaplain can change ecclesiastical endorsement at any time for a variety of reasons.

Any transfer of endorsement to another religious ecclesiastical organization requires the chaplain to inform their current endorsing agent. The ecclesiastical endorsement process, requirements, and timeline differ among the various religious ecclesiastical organizations.

As a general rule, SBC Chaplaincy allows a 90-day transition period for transferring endorsements to another ecclesiastical body and will include either a with or without prejudice comment.

## **Oversight and Supervision**

Chaplains typically serve in a secular institutional setting that authorize and hold them accountable. Chaplains are also sent to the field by faith groups that endorse them. A chaplain maintains his or her endorsement, and therefore employability, by staying in affiliation and good standing with his or her faith group. However, it is the secular institution that employs and authorizes chaplains as their religious leaders and official representatives.

The Chaplains Commission, through the administrative actions and pastoral care of the SBC Chaplaincy Team, retains ecclesiastical oversight of the chaplain's work and life as a representative of the SBC. The Chaplaincy Team members are available to respond to any questions or concerns.

Each applicant for denominational endorsement by the Chaplains Commission is expected to understand, accept, and support the Commission's policies and purposes.

## **Discipline and Withdrawal of an SBC Endorsement**

An SBC-endorsed chaplain may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including withdrawal of endorsement when he or she violates a law (local, state, federal, including the Uniform Code of Military Justice), agency policy, SBC general expectations as stated in [\*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000\*](#), *NAMB Code of Conduct and Covenant of Support*, a personal or professional ethic that impacts his or her effectiveness, or is an embarrassment to the cause of Christ, Southern Baptists, NAMB, or sending SBC church.

The Chaplains Commission desires that justice, grace, and mercy be exercised in all situations for personal redemption and restoration. However, withdrawal of endorsement may result from any situation deemed by the Chaplains Commission to warrant such action.

It is the right of any autonomous entity (i.e., institution or professional organization) to which a chaplain belongs, or the judicial system, to choose to exercise disciplinary measures it deems necessary.

The endorsed SBC chaplain's relationship with God and his or her family is of utmost importance. Restoration to ministry is the desire of the SBC Chaplaincy. However, it may not always be possible depending on the nature of the violation. A chaplain must closely guard his or her personal reputation since it is foundational for ministry (Titus 1; 1 Tim. 3).

Chaplains are expected to inform the appropriate SBC Chaplaincy Endorser immediately upon being accused of a violation regarding their ministry concerning a felony arrest or other situation which could adversely impact their effectiveness, or is an embarrassment to the cause of Christ, Southern Baptists, NAMB, or the sending SBC church. The Chaplains Commission and the Chaplaincy Team desire to be of assistance to the chaplain experiencing extreme difficulties in his or her life.

The disciplinary/withdrawal process will usually include the following steps:

1. The appropriate Endorser is informed, preferably by the chaplain via telephone or other expeditious means. Institutions are welcomed and encouraged to contact the Endorser.
2. The Endorser then advises the Chaplaincy Executive Director for possible recommendations, including the removal of the endorsement.
3. The Chaplaincy Executive Director confers with and provides a recommendation to the Chaplains Commission and/or the NAMB President.
4. The SBC Chaplaincy Team, in collaboration with the Chaplains Commission, will work with the chaplain in a restorative relationship as appropriate to the situation and per NAMB/SBC guidelines and policies.

## Personnel Policies of the Chaplains Commission

The SBC Chaplains Commission consists of NAMB Trustees. They derive their charter and mission from the executive action of the SBC. NAMB is an agency of the SBC whose messengers over the years have adopted resolutions on a variety of subjects.

Chaplains are expected to live with the highest practice of integrity. They are expected to abide by guidance given to them by the SBC, NAMB, and/or SBC Chaplaincy Team. By seeking and receiving an SBC Chaplaincy endorsement, chaplains indicate their willingness to cooperate with the Chaplains Commission, SBC, in carrying out its policies and programs and abide by the *NAMB Code of Conduct and Covenant of Support*. Applicants and endorsed chaplains with questions, comments, or difficulties in the areas of these policies are encouraged to contact the appropriate Chaplaincy Endorser.

### Doctrinal Stability

The Chaplains Commission considers an affirmation of [\*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000\*](#) essential for endorsement. The initial and updated application process offers an opportunity for the applicant to affirm support of these doctrinal statements.

## Divorce and Remarriage

We support the statement regarding marriage in Article XVIII of the *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.<sup>14</sup> However, divorce is complicated. An applicant who has a history of divorce can apply for endorsement with the full support of his or her SBC sending church and in accordance with current NAMB policy. SBC Chaplaincy guidelines require that from the official date of divorce, the chaplaincy applicant shall have waited two years before remarriage. In the event of remarriage, the chaplaincy applicant will have experienced five years of a successful second marriage.

When we receive an application from someone who has been divorced, we consider his or her entire application package, including the church placement letter and pastoral recommendation. Additionally, we seek clarification/explanation from the applicant regarding the marital history to determine the appropriate response.

A chaplain's spiritual and relational health is a vital component of his or her ministry. Once endorsed, the Chaplaincy Team desires to play a supportive role with the chaplain and family involved in separation or divorce. All currently serving endorsed chaplains who are divorced or remarried will be evaluated with grace and mercy on an individual basis. In accordance with current NAMB policies, a biblically based divorced individual may or may not receive or keep his or her endorsement. In this day in which the institutions of marriage and family are under attack, and standards of the highest order are often being abandoned or compromised, NAMB Trustees believe that those serving as Southern Baptist Chaplains should exemplify the highest standards possible due to the critical role of spiritual leadership and personal example that flows from their position.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, Article XVIII "The Family," accessed December 3, 2025, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#xviii-the-family>.

<sup>15</sup> "SBC Referral: Revising Missionary Appointment Policies with Regard to Divorced Persons (Items 24 and 51 from June 2001 SBC Annual Meeting," Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention 2002, St. Louis, MO 2002, June 11-12, 2002 (Nashville: Executive Committee, SBC 2002), 208-209.

# CHAPTER 6

## GENERAL EXPECTATIONS OF SBC CHAPLAINS

The Chaplains Commission expects that endorsed chaplains will present biblical truths in their ministry and be ready to guide persons who are responding to the work of the Holy Spirit toward a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Although SBC Chaplains are expected to be evangelistic, they should not proselytize people active or unaffiliated with any faith group to respect the autonomy and dignity of individuals from diverse faith backgrounds.

### Personal Ethics

#### Integrity

Chaplains are called to live above reproach as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Chaplains must recognize that those they serve rely on their personal integrity, moral principles, and ethical conduct of the highest standard.

#### Chaplain Relationships

Since chaplains are called upon to provide counseling and care to people or families experiencing various life issues, chaplains must exercise sound judgment to preclude involvement that goes beyond an acceptable counselor-client relationship. Such non-professional involvement results in the deepest personal hurt to the chaplain and other people involved, as well as loss of ministry effectiveness and Christian credibility. Chaplains strug-

gling in this area should notify their SBC Chaplaincy Endorser and seek help as soon as possible.

### Ministry to All Persons

SBC-endorsed chaplains are expected to minister to all people, regardless of their religious preference, behavior choices, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, or physical condition/presence. In providing this ministry, they should seek to help the person recognize God's intended order for life and to understand his or her need to humbly acknowledge God's plan for his or her life. Chaplains should be as inclusive as possible for mandatory activities and appropriately exclusive in ecclesiastical function and performance as long as it does not contradict their personal faith, beliefs, or practices.

### Relationships to Other Faith Groups

Chaplains will often serve in environments with diverse religious beliefs and practices. Southern Baptist chaplains should seek to display a spirit of cooperation and team building. Chaplains are expected to cooperate with those of other faiths without compromising Southern Baptist beliefs and practices. Good ministry relationships will come from being acquainted with and sensitive to the customs and cultures of the people with whom chaplains work and minister.

### Recognition of Ministry Limitations

SBC chaplains are endorsed to serve within specialized ministry environments. SBC chaplains not only represent themselves but also the churches and members of the SBC. Endorsed Southern Baptist chaplains, within their respective institutional settings, provide ministry according to the principle of "cooperation without compromise." SBC chaplains *will*:

- Lead and support religious services, programs, or civil observances in accordance with [\*The Baptist Faith and Message 2000\*](#) and *The Southern Baptist Endorsement Manual for Chaplains*
- Provide biblical counseling and pastoral care for those of like faith and make provisions to meet the religious or spiritual needs of others
- Treat everyone with Christ-centered dignity, honor, and respect
- SBC chaplains are free to lead or participate in religious services with any chaplain who is a Trinitarian and accepts the authority of God's Word

When a ministry request does not comply with SBC beliefs and practices, the chaplain will coordinate with another chaplain or religious leader to perform the requested ministry.

Although SBC chaplains will extend dignity, love, and compassion to everyone, they will *not*:

- Conduct any religious service or ceremony jointly with a chaplain, contractor, or volunteer that could be reasonably misconstrued as affirming a homosexual lifestyle, sexual immorality, and other such unbiblical conduct
- Officiate, participate in, or attend a marriage or union ceremony for any couple contrary to the following biblical mandates that:

“ . . . all persons are created in God’s image and are made to glorify Him; . . . God’s design was the creation of two distinct and complementary sexes, male and female; . . . affirm God’s good design that gender identity is determined by biological sex and not by one’s self-perception.”<sup>16</sup>

“ . . . marriage is between one man and one woman, ordered by God toward the union of the spouses, the means of procreation, formative of family, and foundational to the common good of society.”<sup>17</sup>

- Provide any pre-marital or marital counseling and/or marriage enrichment training in support of such a union

This biblical guidance, under the authority of the SBC-endorsing body, remains in effect irrespective of any civil law authorizing same-sex marriage, transgender marriage, or equivalents to marriage. Questions or concerns about the utilization of Southern Baptist-endorsed chaplains should be referred to the Chaplaincy Team at the North American Mission Board by contacting 800-634-2462, or [chaplains@namb.net](mailto:chaplains@namb.net).

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<sup>16</sup> 2014 SBC Resolution “*On Transgender Identity*,” accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-transgender-identity/>.

<sup>17</sup> 2016 SBC Resolution “*On Biblical Sexuality and the Freedom of Conscience*,” accessed December 3, 2025, <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-biblical-sexuality-and-the-freedom-of-conscience/>.

## Baptism and the Lord's Supper

These are the two ordinances of SBC churches. Through the endorsement process, each cooperating SBC church provides the chaplain with the necessary credentials to administer these ordinances and the scope of ministry. Therefore, endorsed Southern Baptist chaplains are to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper under the authority of the chaplain's local Southern Baptist church.

## Contact Information

Chaplains are required to keep the Chaplaincy Team informed of contact information changes (i.e., address, telephone numbers, and e-mail). The Quarterly Report, [MyNamb portal](#), email, text, telephone, or letter are recommended means for the advising of changes in contact information. Additionally, endorsed chaplains can update their basic profile information through their chaplain portal ([mynamb.net](#)).

## Quarterly Reports

Upon endorsement and affiliation with an institution or professional chaplaincy organization, a chaplain is required to complete a Quarterly Report. This required report is used to gather statistical data reflective of the chaplaincy to which the chaplain is endorsed. Individual reports are never used in a comparative process to evaluate effectiveness in ministry. The statistical summary and narrative parts aid in telling the story of ministry provided by Southern Baptist-endorsed chaplains.

The SBC Chaplaincy Team provides the Quarterly Report reminders through email. Quarterly Reports can be completed either through an endorsed chaplains' portal on [mynamb.net](#), or [chaplainqr.namb.net](#). For one's endorsement to remain active, it is the chaplain's responsibility to ensure that a report is submitted each quarter.

## Chaplaincy Professional Development Training (CPDT)

SBC Chaplaincy Training events for endorsed chaplains allow them to stay connected with the SBC Chaplaincy Team and other SBC chaplains and to grow professionally. This training provides theological and denominational training for Southern Baptist chaplains to maintain a high level of proficiency in chaplain pastoral care ministry.

SBC-endorsed chaplains are expected to attend at least one chaplain specific training event (ideally SBC sponsored/hosted) once a year to ensure all chaplains are developing and maintaining their ministry skills and networking opportunities. It is acceptable to attend any SBC training event (on-site or online).

The events that meet this professional development training requirement are described below. Please contact the [SBC Chaplaincy Team](#) with questions concerning chaplaincy training events.

### **Regional SBC Chaplaincy Training Conferences**

Every year, NAMB's SBC Chaplaincy Team hosts regional events for Southern Baptist chaplains in the United States and around the world. These annual chaplain trainings provide opportunity for spiritual renewal, continuing education, best practices, networking, and fellowship for all SBC-endorsed chaplains who attend. Chaplains are encouraged to attend the conference nearest their location.

### **State Convention or Associational Training**

These events are sponsored by the SBC state convention or local association. The state/associational chaplaincy representative plans the conference and provides registration information.

### **SBC Chaplaincy Quarterly Webinars**

These quarterly webinars are available either live or can be accessed afterwards by a link to those who register for the webinar. Each webinar seeks to provide relevant information and resources for chaplains by a subject matter expert.

### **SBC Annual Meeting and Chaplains Reception**

The annual SBC meeting is a time of fellowship with Southern Baptists from around the nation. It serves as a missions-sending conference as we commission missionaries and celebrate endorsed Southern Baptist chaplains as they proclaim Christ to the ends of the earth. It is also a celebration as we hear ministry reports from our various SBC entities. At the SBC Annual Meeting, the Chaplains Reception provides endorsed chaplains a focused opportunity for networking and renewal.

### **New Chaplain Orientation**

This orientation provides the newly endorsed SBC chaplain with an introduction to NAMB, the Chaplains Commission, and the work of chaplains

as viewed by the SBC Chaplaincy Team. Newly endorsed vocational chaplains should plan to attend a Chaplain Orientation within the first year of endorsement. The Chaplaincy Team will extend invitations.

## **Legal Support**

Chaplains who are under investigation or accused of misconduct are expected to immediately inform their SBC Chaplain Endorser. Situations involving chaplains that require “professional discipline” come within this same procedure/expectation. The chaplain must recognize that his or her ministry may be terminated by the institution or organization due to a loss of respect and trust.

An official investigation can be distressing. The intent of the Chaplains Commission and the SBC Chaplaincy Team is to be of assistance to the chaplain and his or her family. However, neither the Chaplains Commission nor the SBC Chaplaincy Team can provide legal advice or direct legal advocacy. Should the need arise, chaplains are encouraged to consult with third-party legal professionals as appropriate.

## **Privileged and Confidential Communications**

Conversations between a person and a chaplain usually occur because of trust in the chaplain. When faced with a decision about a privileged or confidential communication, the SBC Chaplain must be aware of federal, state, and local laws governing reporting requirements in the jurisdiction in which he or she serves. Some chaplains may be considered a mandated reporter especially in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. Every chaplain should know the policies of his or her institution and professional practices within their specialized ministry. Confidentiality should be maintained as fully as possible within the limits of the law.

## **Liability Insurance**

Chaplains should consult with their institution to determine whether they have liability coverage for the exercise of their ministry. Neither the SBC nor NAMB provides liability insurance coverage for endorsed SBC chaplains.

## **Involvement in Professional Chaplaincy Organizations**

Chaplains are encouraged to be involved in local, state, or national organizations that promote chaplaincy. Chaplains serve as representatives of both Southern Baptists and their institutions in professional chaplaincy organizations.

# CHAPTER 7

## RESOURCES, SERVICES, AND RETIREMENT RECOGNITION

The ministry of chaplains is supported by the Southern Baptist Convention through a network of individuals that includes the Chaplains Commission, the SBC Chaplaincy Team, Chaplain Ambassadors, state/regional convention chaplaincy representatives, local associations, and local SBC churches. The connection among these people provides for ongoing support, encouragement, and fostering of the chaplaincy ministry.

### **Prayer Support**

The power of prayer for effective ministry is essential. The Southern Baptist community provides support to SBC-endorsed chaplains for their prayer needs. In addition to your SBC Church, the resources below are available.

### **Prayer Requests**

Chaplains have the opportunity to list prayer needs for the Chaplaincy Team each quarter. Prayer requests from the Quarterly Report are shared with the entire Chaplaincy Team, including Chaplain Ambassadors.

### ***PrayerConnect***

[PrayerConnect](#) is a NAMB platform to feature weekly prayer requests for North American missionaries and SBC chaplains. Chaplains are encouraged to subscribe to PrayerConnect ([namb.net/subscribe](http://namb.net/subscribe)) to receive these prayer

requests in your inbox. To submit your ministry-related prayer request, use the following link: [namb.net/ministry-prayer-request-submission](http://namb.net/ministry-prayer-request-submission).

### ***Pray for Chaplains***

*Pray for Chaplains* is a website ([prayforchaplains.namb.net](http://prayforchaplains.namb.net)) dedicated to current SBC-endorsed chaplains. Visitors can look for a chaplain and pray for their needs. They can send a notification to the chaplain that they have prayed for him or her.

## **Publications**

Southern Baptists have many resources available for a variety of areas. Visit the *SBC Chaplaincy Resource* page ([namb.net/chaplaincy/chaplaincy-resources](http://namb.net/chaplaincy/chaplaincy-resources)) for the latest resources including articles, podcasts, eBooks, videos, and more.

### ***Baptist Press***

Baptist Press (BP) ([baptistpress.com](http://baptistpress.com)) is the official news service of the Southern Baptist Convention and is headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. Baptist Press is responsible for providing regular news releases about Southern Baptists, serving as the Convention's press representative, and coordinating news operations for annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention.

### ***OnMission***

This is NAMB's award-winning flagship magazine ([namb.net/on-mission](http://namb.net/on-mission)), designed to help you engage with God's mission wherever you live, work, and play, as well as to highlight the work of missionaries across North America. Digital subscriptions are available at [namb.net/on-mission/subscribe](http://namb.net/on-mission/subscribe).

## **Ministry Program Materials**

Chaplains are encouraged to use products from Lifeway Christian Resources ([lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com)). The Chaplains Commission and the SBC Chaplaincy Team do not provide ministry program materials. When using resources from other publishers, chaplains are encouraged to choose materials that faithfully present biblical truth.

## **Chaplain Communications**

As a member of the SBC chaplaincy community, endorsed chaplains are expected to communicate regularly with the SBC Chaplaincy Team. The

Alpharetta, Georgia, office is in the Eastern Time Zone, with core hours from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The following options are provided to enhance communication opportunities.

### **NAMB Connection Center**

The NAMB Connection Center provides customer support through phone calls and emails and supports NAMB's systems for missionary and chaplain endorsement. To contact the Connection Center, you can email [help@namb.net](mailto:help@namb.net) or call 800-634-2462.

### **NAMB Chaplaincy Website**

The NAMB Chaplaincy website, [namb.net/Chaplaincy](http://namb.net/Chaplaincy), is provided to inform persons interested in chaplaincy about the endorsement process, resources, and upcoming events.

### **SBC Chaplaincy Team**

Email, text, and telephone communications are available for contacting each member of the Chaplaincy Team. NAMB's policy is to respond to your message as soon as possible. Staff members usually check their voicemail and email several times daily. Additional information will be provided periodically via email through the SBC Chaplaincy newsletter. SBC-endorsed chaplains should add the following emails to their electronic address book: [info@namb.net](mailto:info@namb.net), [chaplainquarterly@namb.net](mailto:chaplainquarterly@namb.net), [chaplains@namb.net](mailto:chaplains@namb.net), [events@namb.net](mailto:events@namb.net), and [noreply@namb.net](mailto:noreply@namb.net) to insure the timely delivery of Chaplaincy Team communications.

## **Site Visits by SBC Chaplaincy Team**

Periodically, SBC Chaplaincy Team members and Chaplain Ambassadors visit with chaplains at the sites where they provide ministry. The Chaplaincy Team or Chaplain Ambassadors are expected to prearrange these visits. The purpose of each visit is to provide a ministry of presence to the chaplain. Also, it is an opportunity for supervisory leadership to meet their SBC chaplains' ecclesiastical representatives

## **Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care is the holistic support and guidance provided to nurture the spiritual, religious, emotional, and physical well-being of individuals, particularly during times of crisis, transition, or personal challenge. It involves compassionate listening, ministry coaching, offering comfort, and fostering a sense of community and belonging.

Although a chaplain's local church should ideally be his or her primary pastoral care network, the SBC Chaplaincy Team and the Chaplain Ambassadors are available to dialogue with chaplains to maximize their potential in fulfilling God's call, chaplaincy ministry, and life issues.

### **SBC Chaplaincy Team**

The SBC Chaplaincy Team members, along with the ones described below, desire to come alongside SBC-endorsed chaplains to encourage personal and professional development and to assist chaplains in maximizing their potential in fulfilling God's call.

### **Chaplaincy Pastoral Care Manager**

The Chaplaincy Pastoral Care Manager provides timely and compassionate support to SBC-endorsed chaplains and their families especially during key life and ministry transitions. This includes advising, mentoring, and coordinating a range of pastoral care services such as Chaplain Ambassadors, training events, quarterly reports, personal outreach, ministry site visits, and social media engagement. The Pastoral Care Manager also leads and strengthens the ministry of the SBC Chaplain Ambassadors.

### **Chaplain Ambassadors**

Chaplains and their families are supported by a network of Chaplain Ambassadors in geographical regions throughout the world, including a National Chaplain Ambassador for Women. Their role is to support and encourage chaplains in their ministry and personal lives through prayer, various forms of communication, and pastoral interactions.

To find out who your Chaplain Ambassador is or to contact the Chaplain Pastoral Care Manager or a member of the SBC Chaplaincy Team, email [help@namb.net](mailto:help@namb.net) or call 800-634-2462 (Connection Center, NAMB).

## Ministry Transition Assistance

Changing from one ministry opportunity to another is often a difficult and time-consuming journey. SBC Chaplaincy Team personnel offer a variety of information and resources to recommend to those in transition. For those who have the luxury of lead-time, it is recommended that the search for a new position in ministry begin at least one year prior to the transition date.

## Tuition Assistance

The Alfred A. Carpenter Scholarship was created in 1980 to honor the first Executive Director of SBC Chaplaincy. This scholarship helps Southern Baptist chaplains or ministers called to chaplaincy who need financial support for continuing education beyond a Master of Divinity. Request an application via email by contacting the Chaplaincy Training Consultant at [help@namb.net](mailto:help@namb.net).

Many SBC colleges and seminaries offer a scholarship or tuition-assistance for SBC-endorsed chaplains. Contact the financial aid office of the SBC institution for more information.

## SBC Chaplaincy Retirement Recognition

The SBC Chaplaincy Team provides recognition to retiring chaplains by acknowledging their years of service as endorsed SBC chaplains. The retiring chaplain should provide information regarding the retirement to [chaplains@namb.net](mailto:chaplains@namb.net) as soon as the date of retirement and/or ceremony is known.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Chaplains Commission** – A subgroup of the NAMB Board of Trustees appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention who administer SBC chaplain endorsements and provide advisement to the SBC Chaplaincy Team regarding the endorsement process.

**Confidential Communication** – Information between a person and a Chaplain as a formal act of religion or matter of conscience that is sensitive in nature. The limits of confidentiality vary according to chaplain categories. A chaplain should follow the policies of his or her institution or organization.

**Endorsement** – An official statement by the Southern Baptist Convention that affirms to an institution or certifying organization that the chaplain is a called and qualified religious leader who holds Southern Baptist beliefs, is an active member in good standing with a local SBC church, and represents the faith, beliefs, and practices of the SBC within their institution or organization.

**Endorser** – A chaplaincy ministry professional, recognized, empowered, and authorized by a religious group or ecclesiastical endorsing organization to act on its behalf to screen, interview, and provide denominational endorsement for a qualified ministry professional in a specific discipline of chaplaincy ministry. The Endorser is also authorized to withdraw ecclesiastical endorsements on behalf of his or her respective denomination or ecclesiastical endorsing agency.

Currently, the SBC Chaplaincy Team has two Endorsers:

- **Federal:** Responsible for the endorsement of chaplains to all federal entities such as, but not limited to, Military (Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, and Civil Air Patrol) regardless of components (i.e., Active, National Guard, and Reserve), Federal Bureau of Prisons, Veterans Administration, CIA, FBI, and Secret Service.
- **Public Service:** Responsible for the endorsement of chaplains in public institutions that include corporate, correctional, community, disaster relief, healthcare, pastoral counselors, and public safety.

**Full-Time Chaplain** – A person employed who serves an institution as the primary focus of his or her ministry.

**Institution** – An organization, such as a business, healthcare facility, or correctional system, that invites the chaplaincy to take place in their organization.

**Mandatory Reporting** – Refers to the legal requirement for chaplains or other professionals to report specific types of suspected or known harm or abuse to authorities to protect vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities.

**Part-Time Chaplain** – A person employed who serves an institution as the secondary focus of his or her ministry.

**Privileged Communication** – This term is often considered synonymous with confidential communication. This information is not admissible in court proceedings or legal actions. The chaplain does not have the authority to break confidence where privilege is invoked. The privilege belongs to the penitent. Outside of the military, communication is not privileged if it's made to a non-clergy person. The minister must be officially recognized as clergy. Refer to the institution or State of record regarding clergy-penitent issues.

**Professional Chaplaincy Organization** – A professional chaplaincy organization is an entity or association that supports and provides resources for individuals working as chaplains in various professional settings, such as healthcare, military, law enforcement, corrections, and other workplaces. These

organizations offer training, certification, ethical guidelines, networking opportunities, and professional development to chaplains.

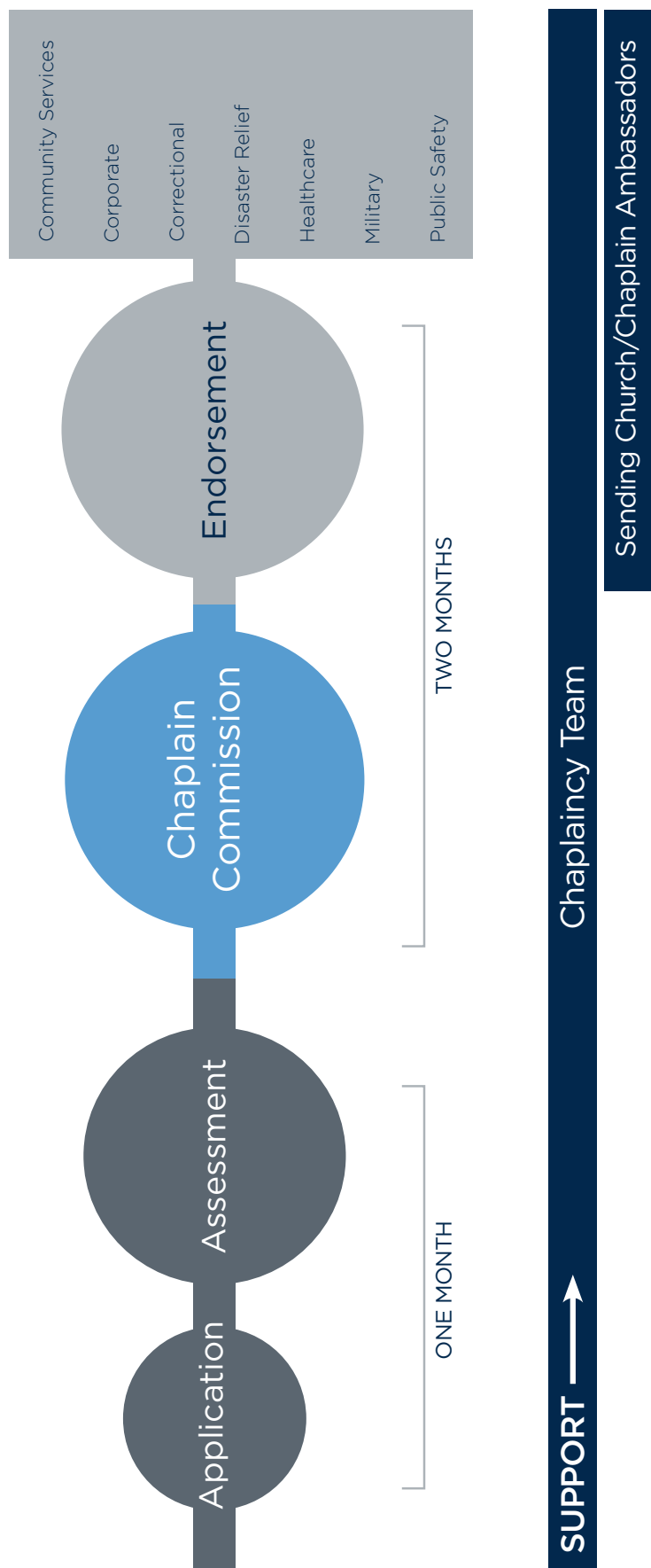
**Professional Ministry Experience (Federal)** – The practical, hands-on ministry completed in a SBC church setting. See [Appendix B](#) for specific guidance.

**Proselytizing** – Unwanted or intrusive attempts to convert others to a particular religion, belief system, or ideology.

**SBC Chaplaincy Team** – This team is assigned to the NAMB President's Office for administrative purposes. Chaplaincy Team personnel are selected through an administrative process and serve for an indefinite period. The team acts on behalf of the Chaplains Commission regarding chaplain endorsement and supports SBC-endorsed chaplains.

**Volunteer Chaplain** – A person who volunteers his or her time and resources to serve an institution as a chaplain.

# CHAPLAIN ENDORSEMENT PATHWAY



## Professional Ministry Experience

Military chaplaincy requires at least two years of “pastoral leadership in a congregational setting.” There are no professional ministry experience (PME) waivers. To assist you and the church you may be serving, the following ministry skills are the minimum of what the SBC Chaplains Commission consider valid PME over a two-year period in a local SBC church setting:

- Leading adults in an SBC church as a pastoral leader called by God to the Gospel ministry.
- Overseeing the planning and leading of a worship service (at least 12 times)
- Crafting and delivering a sermon during a worship service (at least 24 times)
- Experience with providing adult counseling on various topics (e.g., marriage, career, finance, bereavement)
- Experience working with a family to plan and conduct a funeral service (at least 4 times)
- Experience working with a couple seeking marriage by providing premarital counseling and leading the marriage ceremony (at least 1 time)
- Leading a baptism service (at least 2 times)
- Leading and facilitating the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper (at least 2 times)

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