

What Is An Ecclesiastical Endorsement?

At CFGC, we regularly receive calls from prospective chaplains who ask for our “credentials,” so that they can become “full-fledged” chaplains. They often call with a number of mistaken notions like an ecclesiastical endorsement is the same as ordination or perhaps is like a letter of recommendation. They also think that the process of endorsement is a simple overnight process. In truth, few chaplains and even fewer pastors understand just what an ecclesiastical endorsement is and means.

What An Endorsement is Not

An ecclesiastical endorsement is not a letter of recommendation. Anyone or any church can write a recommendation. Only recognized ecclesiastical endorsing agencies can legally endorse. An ecclesiastical endorsement is not ordination. Only a denomination, faith group, or church has the God-given authority to ordain. CFGC respects and recognizes the autonomous authority of its churches and fellowship groups to ordain their clergy. Subsequently, CFGC does ordain prospective chaplains on the authority and at the request of the churches and fellowship groups that we represent.

What An Endorsement Is

An ecclesiastical endorsement is a legal document that states that an ordained minister is spiritually, doctrinally, educationally, and professionally qualified to represent his/her church in a specialized setting (beyond the local church) ministering to all in a religiously diverse context. Simply stated, an endorsement is the document which makes a minister a “chaplain.” Before CFGC will endorse a minister, he/she must complete a thorough application process. The minister must document their basic background information, testimony (of salvation and baptism in the Holy Spirit), education, and professional experience.

CFGC generally requires no specific educational or professional background beyond that which the prospective chaplain’s institution requires. Next, CFGC conducts a criminal background check with a licensed private investigator as well as a spiritual background check with the minister’s pastor, ministerial colleagues, and ordaining authorities. Professional chaplaincy applicants are then interviewed in-person by a member of the CFGC family. In addition to all the above requirements, the prospective chaplain is instructed that they must have a servant’s heart and a willingness to minister to all people regardless of their ethnic, religious backgrounds, and moral values. This is quite a challenge to many clergy, but if a minister desires to be a chaplain, he/she must agree, in writing, to be a servant to all, without discrimination. This lack of bias is especially crucial for chaplains who become supervisors or subordinate chaplains.

An endorsement is only good for a specific period of time, for a specific institution. Endorsement means that a minister is on temporary “loan” from their church to an organization. At almost anytime, for a variety of reasons, a chaplain can have their endorsement withdrawn and the minister quickly becomes a “non-chaplain.” Further, if the chaplain does not perform to the high standards of chaplaincy or is guilty of major sin, he/she is likely to find their endorsement non-renewed, if not “pulled” (prematurely terminated). Ultimately, endorsement links all chaplains to their churches in matters of accountability and spiritual oversight. Thus chaplains are continuously accountable to their sponsoring church, the endorsing agency, and to the institution of which they are a part.

As you can see, an endorsement is a very serious legal document and CFGC is charged by God, the government, and various professional organizations to credential only the finest clergy as chaplains. **Please pray that the Lord grants us supernatural wisdom and sends us quality chaplains!**