

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Becoming a PRCC Chaplain

1. What is a Chaplain?

A: An ordained Teaching Elder who desires to serve as a Gospel Minister outside the church/parish context. A Chaplain typically serves in a religious and pluralistic environment, which is not true of a church pastor.

2. Where can Chaplains serve?

A: It is almost unlimited. But common places are hospitals, airports, police/fire stations, nursing homes, hospices, sports organizations, businesses, prisons (federal, state and local), veteran's hospitals, military, schools, NASCAR, state governments, motorcycle clubs, and Civil Air Patrol.

3. How does one become a Chaplain?

A: Typical requirements can vary from denomination to denomination but would normally include:

- ✓ A Bachelor's degree
- ✓ A Master Of Divinity from a church-blessed seminary
- ✓ Membership in a PRCC denomination
- ✓ Ordination
- ✓ A completed application from two sources:
 - The PRCC endorsement application
 - The job opening application

4. What is an "endorsement?"

A: An endorsement is an affirmation from a "recognized" ecclesiastical group that a person is a legitimate clergyman from that group. The PRCC is the official endorsing agency for its 7-member denominations.

5. Are there some Chaplain positions that do not require an endorsement?

A: Yes...typically found in volunteer positions in some hospitals, nursing homes and police/fire positions. However, any federal Chaplain position (military, VA Hospital, Bureau of Prisons) and most US hospitals require an endorsement in order for a man to be a Chaplain (See #12 for an additional note)

6. Do you encourage all Chaplains to have a PRCC endorsement?

A: Yes...to have a professional endorsing umbrella over a Chaplain in our changing culture is important. An endorser can speak on behalf of a Chaplain in ways a Church cannot. The PRCC urges every teaching elder with a "Chaplain" title to receive a PRCC endorsement.

7. What is a "Chaplain Candidate (CC)?"

A: A CC is a full-time seminarian who seeks to be a military Chaplain someday. He applies to the desired military Service and, if approved, becomes an officer in the CC

Program of that Service. Then, when he graduates and gets ordained, he can apply to transfer to a Service Chaplain Corps as a Chaplain. To be a CC a man must be:

- ✓ A full-time student in an accredited seminary.
- ✓ Under care of a PRCC denomination.
- ✓ Mentored by the denomination during his seminary career
- ✓ “Approved” by the PRCC endorser (which involves a CC application)

8. What documents are critical for men desiring a Chaplain position?

A. Each PRCC denomination has its own foundational documents for approving Teaching Elders:

- ✓ A Book of Church Order (BOCO) of some kind
- ✓ The Westminster Confession or Three Forms of Unity.

The PRCC cannot endorse a man for any Chaplaincy unless he is fully “ordainable” in his denomination. Chaplains are most often placed in an “evangelist” or “ministry out of bounds” category by a presbytery. It is up to each PRCC denomination to determine under what category he might be ordained.

9. What about a Call?

A: Men can be ordained as Chaplains with a PRCC endorsement. In the case of the military, an endorsement serves as the Call for either an Active Duty (full-time) or Reserve (part-time) Chaplain positions. In the case of a civilian Chaplain position, a PRCC endorsement and a position job description usually suffices.

10: What is a “Conditional” Endorsement?

A: This is a category typically used for the military Chaplain Candidate who seeks to be a Reserve Chaplain...but often does have another Call in the offing. I “conditionally” endorse him – which becomes the Call – and then he can go through the ordination process. Once ordained, I date the “conditional” endorsement with the date of his ordination and the “conditional” then becomes “official” ...and that is what goes to the military Chaplain selection board. This arrangement has worked well for several decades across the 7 PRCC denominations.

11. Can a newly ordained man go directly into military Active Duty service?

A: No...the military Services require a minimum of two years of post-ordained, post-MDiv “parish experience” before they can be considered. The Services want to see full-orbed ministry experience on their résumé to include weddings, funerals, preaching, teaching, counseling, and administration.

12. What other credentials are important for Chaplaincy ministry?

A: A good MDiv degree is usually the key credential, but some other considerations are:

For the military:

- ✓ ordained parish experience

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- ✓ some counseling training
- ✓ veteran experience a plus

For the civilian ministry:

- ✓ Hospital and prison Chaplain positions often require some units of **Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)**. One can receive individual units through a local hospital or one can become a CPE Resident for a year at designated hospitals. . Although an endorsement is not always required for a Chaplain to take CPE courses, an endorsement IS required when he pursues Board Certification with the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC).
- ✓ Well-rounded pastoral ministry is appreciated.

13. Is there a need for Chaplains?

A. Yes...since the Reformed world has focused primarily on training parish pastors, it has shied away from Chaplain ministries over the years. Thus, other faith-groups and denominations have filled most of the Chaplain ministry opportunities. There is a growing need for more Reformed men in all Chaplaincy circles.

14: Who would make a good Chaplain?

A: These are some of the key traits, but a particular position might require a more focused set of skills:

- ✓ A strong Call to the gospel ministry.
- ✓ An enthusiastic love for people
- ✓ An eagerness to reach out “where they are.”
- ✓ An appreciation for some counseling skill
- ✓ An ability to work in a mostly-secular, pluralistic environment
- ✓ An ability to work on a team
- ✓ A fearless spirit as “Christ’s Ambassador”

15. Who are our Points of Contacts (POC)?

A. Our website is key - as all our applications, other FAQs, stories, and helpful links are all there – www.prcc.co. Also:

- ✓ Jim Carter/Endorser...for all broad questions and concerns
 - (954)850-2448
 - jcarter@pcanet.org
- ✓ Michael Stewart/Civilian POC
 - (706) 329-3600
 - mstewart@pcanet.org
- ✓ Mack Griffith/Military POC
 - (828) 862-8886
 - mgriffith@pcanet.org
- ✓ Gary Hitzfeld/Administrative POC
 - (678) 386-4541
 - ghitzfeld@pcanet.org

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