

Union of Saints

Ecclesiastical Endorsing Organization

VA Chaplain Endorsement Program Overview

Purpose

The Union of Saints seeks to provide qualified clergy with ecclesiastical endorsement for ministry opportunities, including service within the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in accordance with applicable federal regulations and the mission of the Union of Saints.

This document summarizes the VA's Ecclesiastical Endorsing Organization process and outlines the steps necessary for the Union of Saints to pursue recognition.

Federal Authority

38 C.F.R. § 17.655

Ecclesiastical Endorsing Organizations

This federal regulation establishes the standards by which religious organizations may become recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs as approved Ecclesiastical Endorsing Organizations.

Recognition allows an approved organization to issue ecclesiastical endorsements for qualified clergy seeking appointment as VA chaplains.

Approval does not guarantee employment. Individuals must still satisfy all applicable VA qualification standards, education requirements, and hiring procedures.

Purpose of an Ecclesiastical Endorsement

An ecclesiastical endorsement confirms that an individual:

- Is a member in good standing of the endorsing faith community.
 - Is authorized to perform ministry.
 - Demonstrates appropriate moral and ethical character.
 - Is qualified to provide pastoral care consistent with the traditions and standards of the endorsing organization.
 - Remains accountable to the endorsing organization throughout their ministry.
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VA Recognition Process

To become an approved Ecclesiastical Endorsing Organization, the Union of Saints would generally submit:

- VA Form 10-0379
- Articles of Incorporation
- IRS determination letter recognizing tax exempt status
- Constitution and Bylaws
- Organizational governance documents
- Information identifying the Ecclesiastical Endorsing Official
- Documentation demonstrating compliance with 38 C.F.R. § 17.655

Once approved, the organization may issue ecclesiastical endorsements for qualified clergy serving veterans within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Responsibilities of the Endorsing Organization

An approved Ecclesiastical Endorsing Organization is expected to:

- Maintain established standards for ministry.
 - Evaluate clergy qualifications.
 - Issue endorsements only to qualified individuals.
 - Notify the VA if an endorsement is withdrawn.
 - Maintain records regarding endorsed clergy.
 - Continue operating in accordance with applicable federal regulations.
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Responsibilities of Endorsed Clergy

Individuals endorsed by the Union of Saints are expected to:

- Demonstrate integrity, professionalism, and compassion.
- Respect the religious beliefs of every veteran.
- Provide ministry without coercion or discrimination.
- Maintain good standing within the Union of Saints.

- Comply with all applicable VA policies and ethical standards.
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Proposed Ecclesiastical Endorsing Official

The Union of Saints may designate an Ecclesiastical Endorsing Official who is responsible for:

- Reviewing endorsement applications.
 - Verifying ministerial qualifications.
 - Issuing ecclesiastical endorsements.
 - Maintaining endorsement records.
 - Communicating with the Department of Veterans Affairs regarding endorsed clergy.
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Mission Alignment

The Union of Saints believes spiritual care is an important component of whole person wellness. Chaplains provide comfort, hope, ethical guidance, emotional support, and religious ministry to veterans and their families during times of illness, recovery, grief, and transition.

The Union of Saints supports ministry founded upon:

- Peace
 - Compassion
 - Service
 - Integrity
 - Human dignity
 - Religious liberty
 - Respect for every individual regardless of faith tradition
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Long Term Vision

The Union of Saints seeks to establish a professional ecclesiastical endorsement program that prepares qualified clergy for service in:

- Department of Veterans Affairs facilities
- Hospitals

- Hospice programs
- Long term care facilities
- Emergency response settings
- Community ministries
- Veteran outreach initiatives

The organization is committed to maintaining high ethical standards while supporting the spiritual well being of those entrusted to its care.

Initial Organizational Checklist

- ☐ Maintain active IRS tax exempt status.
 - ☐ Maintain current Articles of Incorporation.
 - ☐ Maintain Constitution and Bylaws.
 - ☐ Adopt formal clergy standards.
 - ☐ Adopt an ecclesiastical endorsement policy.
 - ☐ Designate an Ecclesiastical Endorsing Official.
 - ☐ Complete VA Form 10-0379.
 - ☐ Submit the required supporting documentation to the Department of Veterans Affairs.
 - ☐ Develop procedures for clergy review, endorsement, renewal, and recordkeeping.
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Union of Saints

"Serving with Peace, Compassion, Integrity, and Respect for the Spiritual Needs of Every Veteran."

If you'd like, I can also draft a **formal Ecclesiastical Endorsement Policy Manual** for the Union of Saints, including endorsement standards, application procedures, review criteria, renewal requirements, and revocation procedures that align with VA expectations.