

Join Our Ministry

Becoming an Endorsed Chaplain

Chaplaincy provides ecclesiastical endorsement for chaplains through assessment, training, and supervision of chaplains' ministries. Fully endorsed chaplains are ordained as ministers of the Word or as commissioned pastors. Chaplaincy also provides provisional endorsements or candidate recommendations to assist future chaplains in meeting vocational or educational requirements.

In the process leading to ordination as minister of the Word or commissioned pastor, the church seeks assurance that the prospective pastor is fit for ministry. The church supervises one's doctrine, life, and preparation for ministry. A local church acknowledges one's individual gifts and desire for ministry with a call letter, which is generally confirmed by a thorough examination at a regional meeting (classis) of CRCNA church delegates. Requirements for ordination are established by the CRCNA Candidacy Committee.

In the process leading to endorsement for chaplaincy, the church seeks assurance that the prospective chaplain is fit for specialized ministry. The church ensures that the chaplain's ministry will be consistent with their call to serve as minister of the Word or commissioned pastor, also seeking evidence of the chaplain's suitability to provide pastoral ministry, care, and counsel in a specialized setting.



Endorsement Process - Civilian Chaplains

Requirements for Civilian Chaplains

- Graduation from an accredited college/university and seminary/graduate degree in pastoral care or theology. Chaplains ordained through Church Order Articles 6 or 8 (minister of the Word) require a Master of Divinity (normally 72 hours). Chaplains ordained through Church Order Articles 7 or 23 (commissioned pastor) should possess a Master's degree and significant alternate training and/or experience
- Professing member in good and regular standing in a CRC church
- Ordination, or eligible for ordination, as clergy, minister of the Word, or commissioned pastor in the CRCNA. Those who are not currently ordained may inquire with the [CRCNA Candidacy Committee](#) about status and required steps for ordination.
- Minimum of two units of CPE/SPE (800 supervised hours) completed. Careful consideration will be given to requests for approval of equivalencies for training, ministry experience, and professional credentials. Such requests will be considered by Thrive/Chaplaincy on a case-by-case basis. Candidates seeking equivalency will need to demonstrate that their training, education, experience, and credentials are equivalent to the standards described
- A commitment to continued pastoral education
- Two years of ministry experience is preferred
- Pursuit of certification by an approved professional chaplaincy organization is preferred
- Evidence of the completion of at least two units of Clinical Pastoral Education/Specialized Pastoral Education, including copies of your supervisor's evaluation and a self-evaluation for the last two quarters of training completed.

Endorsement Process - Military Chaplains

Requirements for Military Chaplains

- Theological training (72 hour MDiv) and current ordination in the CRCNA as a minister of the Word and in good and regular standing.
- One unit of CPE/SPE is preferred
- Citizenship in the country they wish to serve (United States or Canada)
- Age and physical qualifications for general service based on military examination
- Significant ordained ministry experience before applying to military chaplain corps (Two years of full-time parish ministry required for active duty)
- You are highly encouraged to have at least one unit of Pastoral Education/Specialized Pastoral Education. Please provide copies of your supervisor's evaluation and a self-evaluation for any completed units.
- Active duty military chaplain applicants must have two years full time parish ministry experience post-MDiv completion.

Requirements for Military Chaplain Candidates (In Seminary)

- Member in good standing in the CRCNA
- Enrollment in an accredited seminary MDiv program. or other process that leads to full ordination and endorsement
- Age and physical qualifications for general service based on military examination
- Able to meet all requirements of the specific military organization for which they seek ecclesiastical approval
- Citizenship in the country they wish to serve (United States or Canada)
- You are highly encouraged to have at least one unit of Pastoral Education/Specialized Pastoral Education. Please provide copies of your supervisor's evaluation and a self-evaluation for any completed units.

Endorsement Application

- Contact Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry Endorser, Rev. Tim Rietkerk, trietkerk@crcna.org, to schedule an appointment to review the application process
- Complete the online [Chaplaincy Endorsement Application](#)
- Select 3 persons to provide letters of recommendation by emailing them the link to the online [Chaplaincy Endorsement Reference](#). Your references should include persons from the following:
 - One from a pastor, board member, or council member of a past church or ministry you have served in a formal or informal capacity. If you are presently in seminary or a recent graduate, a recommendation from a seminary professor may be used.
 - One from a pastor, board member, or council member of the church you currently attend or serve
 - One from a vocational supervisor/mentor (CPE educator, internship supervisor, chaplain)
- Submit to Thrive/Chaplaincy by email to trietkerk@crcna.org the following attachments:
 - Recent photo (it may be an informal picture)
 - Transcript of master's degree
 - Resume
 - Birkman Vocational Assessment (If you do not have the Birkman Vocational Assessments, Rev. Rietkerk will assist in scheduling the assessment with the cost covered by Thrive/Chaplaincy).
- When Thrive/Chaplaincy has received all of the above items, you will be contacted by Rev. Tim Rietkerk for a video conference meeting to review the application and to coordinate for the provisional endorsement interview. If you are declared eligible for endorsement, you will receive a letter with the conditions of your provisional endorsement and the requirements for full endorsement.

Full Endorsement Process

Chaplain applicants for full endorsement should contact a prospective calling church council and provide them with:

- A brief narrative of the journey into ministry
- Job description
- A copy of the Provisional Endorsement letter
- A proposed [Covenant of Joint Supervision](#)

Steps for Calling Church Council

If the council agrees to serve as the calling church, the church council should do the following actions:

- Contact the Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry Endorser, Rev. Tim Rietkerk, trietkerk@crcna.org to seek assistance and counsel at the beginning of the calling process and joint supervision.
- Compose a [letter of call](#) for classical approval (with the concurrence of the Synodical Deputies, when appropriate).
- Provide a copy of classis' approval and the letter of call to the office of Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry.
- Complete the [Covenant of Joint Supervision](#) (This should be written and signed by the chaplain and a church council member before being sent to Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry. Copies with all required signatures will be sent by Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry to appropriate classical functionaries). The CJS will address how the church will:
 - Integrate the chaplain into the life of the congregation:
 - Invite the chaplain to council retreats, council meetings, congregational meetings, congregational retreats.
 - Invite the chaplain to participate in worship services through preaching and prayers.
 - Create an emotional and spiritual support team for the chaplain.
 - Consider the chaplain for being a delegate to the major assemblies of the church.
 - Explore how the chaplain can share their special knowledge and specialized training with church members and council.
- Following classical approval, an [appropriate service of installation](#) should be planned (If this is done in conjunction with ordination, please send the name of the mentor, a copy of the ordination service, and other documentation to the office of Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry).

After receiving the above items/information, Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry will grant full endorsement once the letter of call has been noted/approved in the classis minutes.

Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry will send a letter of full endorsement to the chaplain, calling church, and classis. The chaplain's endorsement and Covenant of Joint Supervision are subject to review and renewal every five years.

Maintain Chaplaincy Endorsement

Joint ecclesiastical supervision should be intentional and meaningful for the calling church, the chaplain, and Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry. Cooperation and mutual accountability between the calling church and Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry will ensure that chaplains are supported as persons ordained by the church, and are a genuine extension of the church's ministry.

Although chaplains usually serve away from the church, they never provide ministry apart from the church. Chaplains are endorsed to extend the church's ministry, not their own. Therefore, if the chaplain's church, school, professional association, or employer notifies Thrive/Chaplaincy of proven ethical, moral or legal violations, ecclesiastical endorsement will be reviewed with the possibility of suspension or withdrawal of endorsement.

Endorsed chaplains are involved in the following levels of accountability and supervision:

- By their calling church and Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry
- By their employing agency or institution
- By their professional certifying organization (when applicable)

Continuation of ecclesiastical endorsement is dependent upon:

- Maintenance of good standing as a member/minister in the CRCNA
- Meeting conditions stipulated in a provisional endorsement
- Submission of an [annual ministry report](#) to the chaplain's calling church and Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry
- Formulation and adherence to a Covenant of Joint Supervision (CJS) with a calling church, to be renewed every five years. Thrive/Chaplaincy will initiate the renewal process with the chaplain and calling church. A letter of re endorsement will be issued upon the completion of the renewal process.

Endorsement Renewal

- Formulation and adherence to a [Covenant of Joint Supervision](#) (CJS) with a calling church, to be renewed every five years. For those chaplains who are ordained as a commissioned pastor, a renewal will have to occur every time a job change happens due to loss of employment or acceptance of new employment.

Board Certification

- For those seeking and maintaining board certification, Thrive/Chaplaincy will provide documentation to assist in this process. Please contact the endorser, Rev. Tim Rietkerk, trietkerk@crcna.org, to discuss the process.

Apply for Training Support

Training support funds are available to prospective and current chaplains for specialized ministry training because of the generosity of those who have contributed to our development fund since its conception in 2002. Priority is given to those who are enrolled in accredited CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) or Supervised Pastoral Education (SPE), or equivalences that address the specific skills necessary for the work of chaplaincy.

If financial assistance is provided, the recipient agrees to serve for a minimum of three years as an endorsed chaplain in an approved ministry setting.

Application for Training Support

- Grants are available for members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church, NA, and who also have completed an accredited undergraduate degree and are currently enrolled or graduated from an accredited seminary.
- Complete the online [Chaplaincy Training Support Application](#) to the best of your knowledge as to where you are right now financially.
- We will confirm receipt of your application within 5 business days. Thrive/Chaplaincy Ministry needs a minimum of 30 days after receiving the application for review, approval, and payment.
- If your application is approved, we will send you an acknowledgement form with the amount for your signature. Keep in mind that if you are approved, you will agree to serve for a minimum of three years as an endorsed chaplain in an approved ministry setting or repay the training support grant.