



**GUIDELINES AND PROCESS FOR THE  
CALLING AND JOINT SUPERVISION  
OF CHAPLAINS**

**Chaplaincy and Care Ministry  
Christian Reformed Church in North America**

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## INTRODUCTION

The synod of 1998 made two decisions affecting persons who seek to enter into or who are currently active in chaplaincy ministry. First, it decided that all ministers and pastors entering into chaplaincy must be endorsed by Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (CCM). Synod also decided that ecclesiastical supervision of the chaplain's duties is the joint responsibility of the calling church and Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. These decisions were added to the ***Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*** Articles 12, 13, and 23, as well as the Church Order Supplement Articles 12-c, 13-c, and 23-c.

This document presents a brief overview of the process by which chaplains are called and supervised by their calling churches and the office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.

## ECCLESIASTICAL ENDORSEMENT AND SUPERVISION

Prior to 1998, ministers and pastors entering chaplaincy were encouraged, but not required, to see endorsement. The synod of 1998 directed that all ministers and pastors who seek to be chaplains must be endorsed. This requirement means that ministers and pastors may not be called and installed in a chaplaincy position unless they have been endorsed for such ministry by CCM.

Endorsement is an ongoing process of supervision by the chaplain's calling church and CCM. In the past, endorsement was primarily considered a one-time event occurring when the chaplain began his work. As an ongoing process, it provides accountability, empowerment, and support for chaplains, and keeps them connected with their calling churches and the denomination. This process is significant because it allows the church to more closely follow and support the chaplain's life, ministry, and doctrine, and to withdraw endorsement should a chaplain no longer meet the standards required of CRC ministry professionals.

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

When the synod mandated joint ecclesiastical supervision, it also made clear that it would be independent of the worksite supervision provided by the hiring institution. Chaplains usually belong to organizations that set competency standards, and these organizations have their own mechanisms to ensure professional competency. The calling church (with the approval of classis) assures that a chaplain's ministry is consistent with their calling and job description, and that they are in good standing in their faith tradition. CCM assures that the education, specialized training, and ministry experience prerequisites have been completed, and that the individual gave appropriate indication (by way of a committee interview) of appropriated giftedness and sense of calling.

The Church Order reflects decisions made by the synod regarding the need for the church to attend to relationships with their chaplains. The Church Order provisions are:

- The prospective chaplain initiates, engages, and works with CCM to achieve endorsement.
- The local church calls and ordains men and women to chaplain ministry (Church Order Articles 12-b, 12-c, 23-c).
- The calling church's council assumes responsibilities in the calling process: in securing the approval of classis for the new chaplain position, in obtaining an endorsement from CCM, and in the ecclesiastical supervision process (Church Order Article 13-b and Church Order Supplement 12-c).
- The calling church will seek the assistance and counsel of CCM at the beginning of the calling process and maintain contact during the process of joint supervision (Church Order Supplement, Article 12-b, 12-c and the synodical rules related to the calling of chaplains as adopted by the synod 1998, [Acts of Synod 1998, pp. 391-92]).
- The calling church council, the chaplain, and CCM will make a Covenant of Joint Supervision clearly outlining the responsibilities, communication requirements, and reporting procedures that will be used in the joint supervision of the chaplain. This covenant will be reviewed every five years to ensure continuity in the supervision of ministry.
- If the chaplain position is routine or has previously been approved, as determined by classes and CCM, then concurrence of the synodical deputies is not needed for the chaplaincy position. However, if the chaplaincy position is not commonly understood to involve traditional chaplaincy ministry, synodical deputies will need to concur in the approval of the position as being consistent with the ministry of the Word (Manual of the Christian Reformed Church Government, Commentary Article 12-b)
- Church visitors are tasked to inquire if the calling church supervises and maintains contact with ministers in specialized settings.
- CCM requires all newly endorsed chaplains, including commissioned pastors, to have a mentor for the first five years of their chaplain ministry. It is the responsibility of the newly ordained person to choose that mentor, though the regional pastor of the classis in which the ordination occurs should guide and monitor the process. CCM may assist the regional pastor in this process.

## **THE COVENANT OF JOINT SUPERVISION**

Ecclesiastical supervision creates a meaningful, interactive relationship between chaplains and their calling church councils. It represents a joint effort between the calling church and CCM to mutually support and encourage chaplains in their specialized ministry. Ecclesiastical supervision is authenticated through the Covenant of Joint Supervision and should include:

1. Written reports provided by the chaplain to the calling church and CCM
  - One or more informal reports

- A copy of the employer's evaluation, usually done annually or after a change in job requirements
  - An annual report that can be shared with the congregation and with church visitors
  - Any changes in the chaplain's position description or the duties required
2. Names of those in the church who will provide church communications as well as emotional and spiritual support for the chaplain
  3. How the chaplain fits into the life of the congregation
    - Including invitations to council retreats, council meetings, congregational meetings, congregational retreats, etc.
    - Including invitations and expectations on preaching and leading worship
  4. How the chaplain can share their special knowledge and specialized training with the congregation
  5. If and when the chaplain can attend or be a delegate to the major assemblies of the church
  6. How the chaplain should communicate the activities of their professional organizations, the ongoing training they are receiving, and plans for educational, personal, and professional development
  7. The office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry's commitment to ongoing endorsement, maintained contact with chaplains' professional organizations, and communication with calling churches as issues and concerns arise
  8. The office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry's review of the chaplain's ministry and renewed Covenant of Joint Supervision every five years, including:
    - A meeting with chaplain
    - Contact with the chaplain's employer
    - Contact with calling church council
    - Review of reports from professional chaplaincy or accrediting organizations
  9. CCM and the calling church's encouragement of the professional development of chaplains as indicated by reviews