

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency in an Emerging Regional Structure

A Rationale for Discernment and Future Alignment

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A White Paper

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Overview

The United Methodist Church is entering a period of structural and missional transition following the ratification of regionalization amendments passed at the 2024 General Conference. As the denomination prepares for a 2026 gathering of reconnection, healing, and vision, and anticipates more comprehensive legislative work in 2028, many ministry areas are beginning to reflect on how their support, Connectional accountability, and episcopal partnership may best be situated within an emerging U.S. Regional Conference.

This paper offers a narrative rationale for considering the future placement of the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA) within that evolving structure. It does not presume legislative action in 2028, nor does it prescribe a particular configuration for the U.S. Region. Instead, it provides theological grounding, historical perspective, and functional insight that may assist the Church in its long-term discernment.

The core claim is simple: endorsed ministry is inherently connected to the bishop's general superintendency. Regionalization presents a natural moment to reflect on how clergy serving in specialized institutional settings — military, VA, health care, corrections, industrial, counseling, and civic institutions — may be most effectively supported, cared for, and held in covenant through the episcopal systems that sustain the rest of the Church's appointed ministry.

Drawing on nearly a century of experience, this paper argues that the future of endorsed ministry support is best understood not through nostalgia or critique, but through careful attention to the theological nature of the work, the historical evolution of its support structures, and the opportunities made visible by the emerging regional framework. Its purpose is to invite conversation, not to anticipate decisions, and to offer clarity that may be useful as the Church seeks to strengthen its witness in the institutions it serves.

Because endorsed ministry is a functional ministry — executing responsibilities the Church must carry out institutionally — its alignment within emerging structures requires forms of reflection that differ from programmatic or resource-based ministries.

I. Introduction

Context and Purpose of This Reflection

The United Methodist Church is in a season of transition unlike any other in recent memory. With the constitutional amendments enabling regionalization now ratified, the denomination is poised to develop structures that reflect the realities of a global Connection

and the needs of regional expressions of mission. This unfolding process will require years of discernment, conversation, and careful legislative work.

In this environment of institutional and spiritual reorientation, many areas of ministry are beginning to reflect on how their work may be situated within the emerging U.S. Regional Conference. Among these are the ministries historically supported by the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA), whose clergy serve in settings that extend the Church's presence into sectors of public life not ordinarily shaped by congregational ministry. These chaplains and extension ministers have long carried out their work under appointment, accountable to the Discipline, and serving within the covenantal structures of the Connection, even as administrative relationships have shifted over time.

The purpose of this paper is to articulate a rationale for thinking about the future support of these ministries in light of regionalization. This rationale is not a proposal. It is not prescriptive, anticipatory, or critical. It does not assume that General Conference 2028 will address this subject, nor does it ask for early conclusions about the structure of the U.S. Region. Rather, it is an offering — a set of reflections grounded in history, theology, and lived experience — intended to assist the Church as it enters a period in which such questions will inevitably arise.

As we move into this season of discernment, it is both appropriate and responsible to examine the ecclesial character of endorsed ministry and to consider how its support might align with the systems of episcopal oversight, pastoral care, accountability, and mission coordination that regionalization is designed to strengthen. This paper seeks to contribute to that larger conversation in a way that is constructive, respectful, and rooted in the spirit of Connectional discernment.

II. The Nature of Endorsed Ministry

Identity, Vocation, and Institutional Context

Endorsed ministry within The United Methodist Church occupies a distinctive and often misunderstood place in the life of the denomination. While clergy appointed to congregations remain the most visible expression of ordained service, a significant number of United Methodist elders and deacons serve in settings where the Church's presence must be interpreted, embodied, and exercised within institutions whose primary purpose is not religious. These ministries take form in the military, the Department of Veterans Affairs, hospitals and health-care systems of every scale, correctional institutions, law-enforcement and first-responder agencies, corporate and industrial settings, counseling centers, and a range of civic or governmental environments in which clergy serve alongside — and sometimes on behalf of — the wider community.

At their core, endorsed ministries are appointed ministries. The clergy who serve in these roles are not separate from the Church but are fully embedded within its covenantal life. They are appointed by their bishops, continue to be members in good standing of their annual conferences, and remain accountable to the Discipline in the same ways as

colleagues serving in congregational settings. Their ministries constitute an extension of the Church's witness into places where the language of faith, the rhythm of worship, and the structures of pastoral care take forms shaped by institutional context rather than congregational expectation.

What sets endorsed ministry apart is less the identity of the clergy themselves than the character of the institutions within which they serve. These settings demand competencies, boundaries, and modes of engagement that differ substantially from congregational ministry. Clergy may be serving within command hierarchies, state or federal agencies, clinical environments governed by professional ethics, or corporate cultures with expectations unfamiliar to the typical church setting. Their effectiveness depends not only on their theological formation and pastoral skill but also on their ability to navigate institutional protocols, multidisciplinary environments, and complex cultural expectations. In many respects, these clergy embody a frontier expression of the Connection, carrying the Church's presence into environments shaped by civic authority, professional ethics, and public trust.

Yet the distinctiveness of these contexts does not remove endorsed clergy from the life of the Church. Instead, it places upon them — and upon the Church that sends them — a unique set of expectations. Endorsed ministers must carry both the authority and the responsibility of representing the denomination to institutions that rely upon them for spiritual care, ethical counsel, and professional presence. Their credibility depends on the Church's recognition of their fitness, their ongoing support, and its assurance that they remain accountable to appropriate systems of oversight. For this reason, endorsement is not a credential of personal permission but an ecclesial affirmation that the Church stands behind the minister it sends.

This combination — appointment, accountability, and institutional representation — creates a constellation of needs that are distinct from those of congregational ministry. Endorsed clergy require:

- guidance and support from leaders who understand the realities of institutional service;
- Connectional accountability and episcopal partnership that honors the autonomy of the institution and maintains the integrity of ordained ministry;
- advocacy when institutional systems intersect with ecclesial concerns;
- pastoral care and spiritual support that reflects the pressures of their environments;
- and
- clarity about the Church's expectations regarding conduct, boundaries, and representation.

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency has long played a central role in helping the Church meet these needs. Yet the nature of endorsed ministry — its complexity, its institutional positioning, and its reliance on ecclesial authority — makes questions of Connectional

support, episcopal partnership, and structural alignment particularly significant as the Church enters a period of regional discernment. Understanding the nature of the ministry itself is therefore essential to understanding how the Church might consider its future alignment within emerging structures.

III. Theological Vision and Practical Oversight in Endorsed Ministry

Foundations, Episcopal Superintendency, and Delegated Support

Endorsed ministry occupies a distinctive place within the life of The United Methodist Church. It arises from the Church's commitment to deploy clergy wherever people live, work, serve, and suffer—whether within congregations or in the institutions of public life. This ministry is grounded in the Church's theology of vocation, its understanding of ordered ministry, and its commitments to Connectional life and episcopal oversight. The following sections explore both the theological foundations that shape endorsed ministry and the practical oversight required to support it.

A. Theological and Polity Foundations

The Church's understanding of ordained ministry rests upon a covenantal relationship between clergy and the annual conference, held together by the episcopal office and the discipline of Connectional life. Every United Methodist clergyperson serves under appointment, not simply as an employee but as one entrusted with a share in the Church's mission. This mission extends beyond the congregation: it includes ministry in hospitals, military installations, correctional facilities, counseling centers, and other institutions where people encounter profound human need.

The Church's theology affirms that ministry in these settings is not peripheral; it is essential. Wesleyan tradition teaches that the world is the parish and that the Church is called to bear witness in every realm of human life. For generations, endorsed clergy have embodied this calling by serving in contexts where spiritual care intersects with civic responsibility, where pastoral presence meets legal and institutional constraints, and where the Church's witness must be offered with clarity, integrity, and respect for the public trust.

Connectional polity reinforces this calling by ensuring that clergy serving outside congregational settings remain fully within the life of the annual conference. They retain their accountability, their relationship to the bishop, and their standing as appointed clergy. The Church's theological understanding of vocation, combined with its polity of appointment, means that endorsed ministry is not an exception to the Church's normative structure—it is one of its most faithful expressions.

Because the Church sends clergy into settings that its ordinary structures cannot directly supervise, it must ensure that they receive appropriate support, pastoral care, and institutional guidance. This necessity leads naturally to the practical realities of episcopal supervision.

B. Episcopal Oversight, Superintendency, and Delegated Responsibility

Endorsed clergy serve under the authority of the bishop and within the scope of *general superintendency*—the constitutional responsibility entrusted solely to bishops and exercised in partnership with district superintendents. General superintendency includes guarding doctrine, overseeing the life and work of the clergy, and guiding the Church’s ministries wherever they occur. No commission, agency, or office assumes superintendency. It is not transferable and cannot be delegated.

Yet endorsed ministry requires specialized support that annual conferences and district superintendents cannot provide on their own. Military chaplaincy, federal institutional service, clinical chaplaincy, and other endorsed fields demand forms of engagement—professional endorsement, institutional liaison, credentialing navigation, and advisory support—that fall outside ordinary conference structures.

For this reason, the Church has long relied on a functional body to assist bishops in carrying out their superintending responsibilities within institutional contexts. This assistance is delegated, not supervisory. It remains fully accountable to the episcopal office and exists to strengthen the bishop’s ability to care for clergy serving in demanding environments.

Delegated responsibility includes:

- navigating institutional requirements for clergy service,
- providing professional and ecclesial endorsement,
- advising bishops and district superintendents on matters of appointment, fitness, and vocational sustainability,
- supporting clergy whose ministries occur outside geographic conference structures, and
- maintaining the Church’s relationships with governmental, civic, and accrediting entities.

These responsibilities do not replicate the supervisory functions of superintendents nor create a parallel structure. Rather, they extend the Connection’s reach, ensuring that clergy serving in complex institutional settings remain supported, accountable, and connected to the Church that appoints them.

This delegated partnership—rooted in the Constitution, reinforced by history, and shaped by the lived experience of endorsed ministry—forms the practical foundation for considering how this work may best be aligned within the emerging U.S. Region. Theological vision and practical oversight are not competing claims; they are two interwoven dimensions of a single ecclesial commitment: to send and support clergy wherever the Church’s mission requires.

IV. Historical Foundations

Evolution, Lessons, and Institutional Realities

The ministries now supported by the United Methodist Endorsing Agency did not emerge as an ancillary activity or an accidental layer of the Church's life. Their origins lie deep within the unfolding story of Methodism's engagement with the world and its desire to serve where people live, work, suffer, govern, lead, receive care, or defend the nation.

Understanding the historical development of these ministries provides helpful perspective as the Church enters a season of regional discernment. The aim is not to recreate the past, nor to use it as a point of comparison, but to draw from the wisdom that history offers as the Connection considers how endorsed ministry might be supported in the future.

Portions of this historical summary draw on the archival research and analysis of Mitchell Lewis, whose work as both a chaplaincy historian and a past Director of the United Methodist Endorsing Agency provides valuable insight into this formative period.

A. Episcopal Oversight and the Early Methodist Pattern (Pre-1941)

From its earliest years, the Methodist movement understood the ministry of its clergy as extending beyond the walls of its societies and congregations. Wesley's preachers ministered in prisons, to soldiers and sailors, among miners and industrial workers, in hospitals, and within the civic spaces of towns and cities. Although the formal structures of endorsement were not yet present, the instinct was already clear: the Church sends its ministers into the world, and it bears responsibility for them wherever they serve. The oversight of such ministries was inherently episcopal in character, even before the modern episcopacy took its shape on American soil.

B. The Emergence of Structured Endorsing Work (1917-1941)

While early Methodist ministry included informal chaplaincy in military and institutional settings, the modern concept of endorsement emerged during World War I. The unprecedented scale of mobilization required the federal government to rely on major religious bodies to recruit, examine, and certify clergy. Protestant participation was coordinated through the Federal Council of Churches' General Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains, with Methodists providing significant leadership. This introduced a new ecclesial responsibility: formally attesting to the readiness and standing of clergy serving in structured public institutions.

During the interwar years, Methodist participation remained strong though not yet administratively distinct. Figures such as Bishop Adna Wright Leonard helped shape national Protestant chaplaincy oversight, and the experience of WWI revealed supervisory and pastoral gaps that could not be addressed through ecumenical structures alone. As clergy served far from their annual conferences, bishops lacked dedicated systems for oversight and support.

These insights culminated in 1941, when the Council of Bishops created the Methodist Commission on Chaplains. This body brought supervision, endorsement, and institutional

liaison into a structure directly tied to episcopal responsibility. The Commission marked the true beginning of organized Methodist endorsed ministry and remains the direct ancestor of the work carried forward today.

C. The Creation of the Commission on Chaplains (1941–1972)

The modern era of endorsed ministry began during World War II, when the Methodist Church created the Commission on Chaplains in 1941. This body was established by the bishops to fulfill their responsibility for appointing and supervising clergy serving in the Armed Forces and related institutional settings. The Commission operated as an extension of episcopal oversight — a delegated structure designed to manage the specialized demands of chaplaincy while maintaining the covenantal relationship between chaplains and their bishops.

For more than three decades, the Commission served as the Church’s primary mechanism for:

- recommending clergy for chaplaincy service,
- assuring their fitness and readiness,
- providing pastoral support during assignments,
- serving as the Church’s interpretive voice to the military and a growing number of other institutional partners, and
- assisting bishops in their supervisory responsibilities beyond the congregational sphere.

Historical accounts of the period reflect broad satisfaction with this arrangement. Chaplains were connected to the Church, bishops had a structured means of supervising ministries they could not directly observe, and institutions had a clear ecclesial point of contact. The Commission’s work was not merely administrative; it was relational, pastoral, and deeply grounded in the understanding that these ministries are part of the Church’s mission.

D. The 1972 Administrative Realignment

The reorganization of The United Methodist Church in 1972 brought significant changes to the structure of general agencies. In an effort to consolidate programmatic functions and streamline administrative responsibilities, the Church placed the Commission on Chaplains within what became the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM). This shift reflected the priorities of a newly merged denomination still finding its administrative center.

Importantly, this realignment was administrative in its intent, not theological in its rationale. There is no evidence that the Church intended to redefine the ecclesial nature of endorsed ministry or to reposition the bishops’ responsibility for supervising clergy serving in institutional settings. Instead, the placement resulted from the desire to collect educational, formational, and personnel-related functions within a single general agency.

In the five decades since the transition, the work of endorsement has been carried out faithfully within GBHEM, even as the complexity of institutional chaplaincy has grown. The administrative home has differed from its earlier location, but the foundational responsibility for appointing, supervising, and caring for endorsed clergy has remained with the bishops of the Church — a fact recognized both in practice and in the expectations of the institutions the Church serves.

E. History as Wisdom, Not Prescription

As the Church looks toward an emerging U.S. Regional Conference, this history provides a helpful source of wisdom. It shows that:

- the Connection has long recognized the unique demands of endorsed ministry;
- the oversight of these ministries has historically been exercised through episcopal structures;
- administrative locations can change without altering the underlying ecclesial responsibility; and
- specialized ministries benefit from systems designed to interpret both the Church and the institutions they serve.

None of these historical observations dictate a particular path for the future. What they offer is a grounding perspective: that endorsed ministry has always depended on a relational and supervisory framework that reflects both its ecclesial identity and its institutional realities. As the Church discerns the future shape of the U.S. Region, this history can serve as a resource — an anchor of understanding — without binding the Church to past configurations.

F. A Foundation for Forward Discernment

History provides the launch pad, not the flight plan. The emerging structures of the U.S. Region will be shaped by the Church's deliberations in 2028 and beyond. The past cannot prescribe those outcomes, but it can help illuminate the enduring commitments that ought to inform them. Endorsed ministry has always stood at the intersection of the Church and the institutions of public life. It will continue to do so. The question before the Connection is how best to support that ministry in the structures that will soon take form.

V. Regionalization and the Arc of Discernment

Timing, Process, and Implications for Functional Ministries

Regionalization offers the Church a renewed opportunity to reflect on the relationship between its structures and its ministries. Yet it is important to recognize the pace at which this transition will unfold. No legislative changes affecting the broader configuration of the Church's ministries can be enacted before the next regular session of the General Conference in 2028. The bodies and processes that will shape the U.S. Region's administrative life will emerge only after the General Conference completes its work and after the first U.S. Regional Conference convenes to consider adaptable portions of the

Discipline. As a result, structural decisions related to ministry alignment belong to a future moment and will require several stages of discernment over multiple years.

During this period, jurisdictions will continue to elect and assign bishops, and existing general church agencies will continue to carry out their responsibilities. The first U.S. Regional Conference is expected to focus primarily on legislative matters related to adaptable Discipline sections rather than establishing administrative structures. Any future reconfiguration of ministries within the U.S. Region—including whether certain general church functions should be located regionally—will depend on developments that occur after 2028 and may extend well into the next quadrennium.

This extended timeline has particular implications for functional ministries. Because endorsed ministry operates entirely within U.S. institutional settings, its work must remain aligned with the ecclesial structures that currently exist while also being prepared to engage with the structures that will emerge within the Region. Functional responsibilities—endorsement, institutional liaison, credentialing navigation, and advisory support to the episcopacy—require stability and clarity during a period when regional structures are still taking shape.

For this reason, it may be helpful for the Church to recognize that functional ministries often experience transition in stages. Before new regional bodies are formed, functional ministries may need to continue their work within existing general church or conference structures, with the understanding that future alignment will be shaped by the discernment and decisions of the U.S. Region once its administrative capacities are established. Such transitional placement would not predetermine regional outcomes; rather, it would ensure that essential responsibilities are carried out faithfully while the Connection lives into its emerging structures.

This moment in the life of the Church is therefore best understood not as a time for structural decision but as a time for foundational clarity. Theological commitments, constitutional boundaries, functional needs, and Connectional identity all shape the questions that will lie before the U.S. Region. As regionalization unfolds, these foundational insights can serve as guides—helping the Church prepare for conversations that cannot yet be held and decisions that cannot yet be made, but which will soon become essential to its shared life and mission.

VI. Functional Alignment in the Emerging U.S. Region

Principles for Support Without Prescribing Structure

Endorsed ministry is a functional expression of the Church's mission, rooted in ecclesial vocation and carried out within institutional environments shaped by U.S. law, federal accreditation, and professional standards. Because this ministry emerges from the Church's theology and polity (as explored in Section III), any conversation about its placement within the emerging U.S. Region must begin not with structure, but with the functional requirements that allow this ministry to flourish faithfully and responsibly.

Functional ministries differ from programmatic ones. Programmatic ministries— curriculum development, congregational vitality initiatives, administrative coordination— can be shaped by preference, strategic initiative, or denominational emphasis. They are designed to equip and enrich. Functional ministries, by contrast, exist because the Church must execute essential responsibilities that cannot be delegated to congregations or annual conferences alone. Endorsement, institutional liaison, credentialing navigation, and Connectional support in institutional settings are not optional activities; they are intrinsic to the Church’s deployment and care of clergy.

For this reason, the question before the emerging U.S. Region is not “Where does UMEA belong structurally?” but rather “What structural environment best supports the functional responsibilities required for clergy serving in institutional contexts?” The Church’s response to that question must account for several factors.

First, endorsed ministry is fully contextual to the United States. Its institutional partners— military, Veterans Affairs, corrections, healthcare systems, law-enforcement agencies, and professional accrediting bodies—operate entirely within the legal and administrative frameworks of the U.S. context. Functional support for clergy serving in these settings must therefore be carried out within the ecclesial structures that pertain to the U.S. Region.

Second, the delegated responsibilities that support episcopal superintendency in institutional contexts require institutional literacy and sustained interface with governmental and civic authorities. The emerging U.S. Region will need structures capable of engaging these responsibilities without assuming supervisory authority and without undermining the constitutional role of bishops and district superintendents.

Third, because the contours of the U.S. Region have not yet been defined, any reflections offered here must remain adaptable. The Region may develop episcopal bodies, collaborative ministry tables, or functional agencies not yet envisioned. Its decision-making processes may evolve slowly or rapidly. Given this uncertainty, any attempt to prescribe specific placement would be premature. What can be offered, however, are principles of alignment that the Church may find helpful as regional discernment unfolds.

Fourth, endorsed ministry occupies a frontier space within the Connection. Clergy serving in institutional settings carry the Church’s witness into environments governed by civic authority, professional standards, and public trust. Their ministries require clarity of ecclesial identity, sustained Connectional support, and faithful engagement with institutions that often operate far from congregational life. Any future structure supporting this ministry must therefore be capable of honoring the distinctive demands of frontier service—its opportunities, its constraints, and its vital contribution to the Church’s mission.

These principles do not dictate how the U.S. Region should organize its ministries. Rather, they invite reflection on how a functional ministry—one that supports episcopal oversight, interfaces with U.S. institutions, and sustains clergy serving outside traditional ecclesial settings—might be most faithfully aligned within emerging structures. Placement is not a

matter of authority but of ecological fit: where a ministry can most effectively carry out the responsibilities the Church entrusts to it, in partnership with the episcopacy, and in service to the Connection.

What follows, then, is not a presentation of structural options but a set of interpretive considerations—drawn from history, practice, and Connectional commitments—that may assist the U.S. Region as it discerns how functional ministries such as endorsed ministry can be supported with clarity, integrity, and strength.

VII. Principles for Future Structural Discernment

Historical Grounding and Emerging Horizons

As the United Methodist Church enters a season of regional discernment, questions about the future placement of UMEA will inevitably arise. These questions must be approached with clarity about the nature of endorsed ministry, humility about the uncertainties of regional development, and attentiveness to the patterns that have shaped the Church's support for this ministry across more than a century. The purpose of this section is not to decide where UMEA ultimately belongs, but to outline principles that may guide future discernment once the structures of the U.S. Region begin to take form.

A recurring theme throughout Methodist history is that structures evolve in response to mission. Endorsed ministry emerged because clergy were needed in settings outside congregational life. Its support structures developed because those clergy required ecclesial recognition, Connectional accountability, and institutional credibility. Regionalization presents another moment of structural evolution. The Church now has an opportunity to reflect on how endorsed ministry might best be supported in a landscape shaped by regional autonomy, differentiated responsibilities, and new patterns of episcopal collaboration.

Several principles may be helpful as the Connection reflects on these questions:

A. Alignment with Episcopal Systems of Appointment and Accountability

Endorsed ministry remains an appointed ministry. Clergy serving in institutional settings are members in good standing of their annual conferences and serve under the authority of their bishops. Any future placement of UMEA must therefore honor the constitutional reality that appointment, supervision, and ecclesial accountability reside within the episcopal system. Functional support structures should complement — not duplicate or replace — the oversight exercised by bishops and district superintendents.

B. Recognition of Endorsed Ministry as Functional Rather Than Programmatic

Functional ministries carry responsibilities the Church must execute institutionally in order to sustain its witness and relationships with external bodies. They differ from programmatic ministries, which focus on resource development and coordination. Endorsed ministry requires processes of endorsement, liaison work with civic and governmental institutions, professional credentialing, and specialized support — all of which constitute essential functions rather than optional programs. Future placement

should ensure that these functional responsibilities remain clearly defined and adequately supported.

C. Continuity with Historical Patterns of Ecclesial Support

Across more than a century, endorsed ministry has been supported through stable patterns of episcopal relationship, institutional liaison, and Connectional accountability — even when administrative homes have shifted. These historical patterns offer guidance for future structure. The Church need not replicate earlier models, but it should recognize that the work of endorsement aligns naturally with settings that can sustain consistent ecclesial partnership and understand the complexities of institutional ministry.

D. Flexibility in Anticipation of an Unsettled Structural Landscape

Because the U.S. Region has not yet taken form, any consideration of future placement must remain open-ended. Jurisdictions may retain responsibilities for years; new regional bodies may emerge; agency relationships may shift. The Church will need the freedom to adapt as these structures develop. The purpose of these principles is therefore not to predict outcomes, but to provide a set of interpretive lenses that may assist discernment once the broader landscape is clearer.

E. Integration with the Frontier Character of Endorsed Ministry

Chaplains and extension ministers routinely navigate environments shaped by civic authority, professional ethics, public trust, and institutional complexity. Their work represents a frontier expression of the Connection: ministry carried into places where the Church's presence is both needed and constrained by external expectations. Future structural placement must account for this frontier character by ensuring that endorsed clergy receive support from structures capable of understanding and responding to the demands of institutional contexts.

F. Openness to Emerging Regional Conversations

As the U.S. Region develops, it is reasonable to expect the formation of bodies responsible for ministry coordination, episcopal collaboration, and Connectional support. The structure of these bodies cannot yet be known, but the Church can anticipate that endorsed ministry will relate to them in some way. Whether through episcopal colleges, regional ministry tables, or other emerging configurations, future discernment should consider how endorsed ministry can participate in — and be strengthened by — these evolving forms of Connectional life.

Taken together, these principles offer guidance rooted in history, theology, and the lived realities of endorsed ministry. They do not prescribe an outcome, nor do they assume a particular structural model. Instead, they provide a framework for reflection that may help the Church discern the most faithful and functional placement of endorsed ministry within the emerging U.S. Region.

VIII. Integrative Reflections for Future Discernment

Insights for Connectional and Regional Conversations

As the Church moves toward the formation of the U.S. Region, endorsed ministry offers a unique vantage point from which to consider how functional ministries may be supported within evolving Connectional structures. The preceding sections have explored theological foundations, historical patterns, functional dynamics, and the emerging context for regional discernment. This section brings those threads together in order to illuminate themes that may guide the Church's reflection without prescribing outcomes.

A. Holding Together Theology, Function, and Context

Endorsed ministry occupies the intersection of three enduring commitments: the Church's theology of vocation, its polity of episcopal oversight, and its call to serve the world in places where human need meets institutional complexity. These commitments form a coherent whole. A ministry that is rooted in the bishop's sending, accountable to the annual conference, and lived out within civic and governmental institutions requires support that is both ecclesial and contextual. The Church's approach to this ministry must therefore honor theological foundations while taking seriously the distinctive character of institutional service in the United States.

B. Functional Responsibilities and Connectional Identity

The Church entrusts endorsed ministry with responsibilities that are functional rather than programmatic: endorsement, institutional liaison, credentialing support, and advisory partnership with the episcopacy. These responsibilities are not optional; they are essential to appointing clergy to institutional settings and to sustaining the Church's witness within them. Functional ministries require structural environments capable of carrying out these responsibilities faithfully, consistently, and in collaboration with bishops and district superintendents.

At the same time, endorsed clergy remain fully within the life of the annual conference. Their identity as United Methodist elders and deacons is not diminished by the specialized context of their service. This dual reality—Connectional identity and institutional deployment—shapes the kind of support structures that may be needed as the Church considers future alignment within the U.S. Region.

C. Frontier Ministry as a Guide for Regional Reflection

Endorsed ministry has long served as one of the Connection's frontier expressions. Chaplains and extension clergy carry the Church's presence into environments governed by civic law, professional standards, and public trust. Their ministries reveal what the Connection often asks of its structures: clarity of purpose, institutional literacy, consistency of support, and flexibility in contexts far removed from congregational life. This frontier vantage point can help the Church envision how functional ministries might be supported within new regional frameworks—frameworks that must account for both the Church's theological commitments and the realities of U.S. institutional life.

D. Transitional Realities and the Pace of Regionalization

Because the U.S. Region's administrative capacities will emerge gradually after 2028, the Church may find that functional ministries require a period of stability within existing structures before regional decisions can be made. Such transitional placement would not predetermine regional outcomes. Rather, it would allow essential responsibilities to continue uninterrupted while the Region develops its bodies, processes, and discerning capacities. This reflects the long-standing practice of the Connection: to ensure continuity of ministry even as structures evolve over time.

E. What This Paper Does Not Claim

To maintain clarity, it is important to state explicitly what this paper does not attempt to determine:

- It does not propose the placement of endorsed ministry within a specific future structure.
- It does not presume the shape of regional governance after 2028.
- It does not suggest that existing agencies or regional bodies must be altered.
- It does not claim to represent the collective voice of all endorsed clergy.
- It does not anticipate decisions that properly belong to the U.S. Region once its administrative life is established.

What the paper offers instead is a framework of theological, functional, and contextual insights that may assist the Church as it begins a multi-year process of discernment.

F. Integrative Insight

Taken together, these reflections suggest that endorsed ministry can serve as a constructive conversation partner as the Connection moves toward regionalization. Its history demonstrates the value of dedicated functional support. Its present work reveals the importance of institutional engagement and episcopal partnership. Its frontier posture helps the Church imagine how ministries may flourish at the boundary of Church and world. These insights are offered not to steer decisions but to strengthen the conversations that will shape the Church's future.

IX. Invitation to Conversation

Shared Discernment and the Road Ahead

The reflections offered in this paper arise from the lived experience of a ministry that has long served at the boundary where the Church's mission encounters the institutions of public life. They are not presented as conclusions or proposals, but as perspectives that may assist the Connection as it enters a multi-stage season of regional discernment. Decisions related to the alignment of functional ministries will unfold gradually, shaped by the deliberations of the General Conference, the early work of the U.S. Regional Conference, and the administrative bodies that emerge in the years that follow.

As those processes take shape, the insights of endorsed ministry may help illuminate how the Church supports clergy whose service requires both ecclesial accountability and institutional engagement. Endorsed ministry has always lived in contexts where the Connection's commitments are tested, interpreted, and embodied in complex settings. The frontier wisdom of this community—its attentiveness to vocation, institutional realities, and the requirements of public trust—may offer guidance as the Church considers how ministries of all kinds can be supported within new regional frameworks.

This paper is offered in a spirit of openness and collaboration. It reflects the observations of one who has served within this community and who hopes these reflections may be of value as the wider Church considers its path forward. The goal is not to represent an entire constituency, but to contribute to the broader conversation with the same commitment to service, accountability, and Connectional life that has shaped endorsed ministry for generations. Whatever form the U.S. Region ultimately takes, the hope is that these insights will assist the Church in discerning how all its ministries may be supported with clarity, integrity, and strength.

Author's Note

This paper was prepared independently and reflects the perspective and lived experience of the author as a member of the endorsed clergy community. It was not developed in collaboration with, nor does it represent the official position of, the United Methodist Endorsing Agency, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, or any Episcopal leader or body. It is offered solely as a contribution to the wider Connectional conversation as the Church continues its discernment regarding emerging regional structures and the ministries they support.

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APPENDIX I — GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Definitions Used Within This White Paper and Related Discernment Materials

Foundational Ecclesial Terms

Appointment

The act by which a bishop assigns a clergyperson to a ministry setting, affirming the Church's sending and its ongoing responsibility for that minister's work. In endorsed ministry, appointments place clergy within institutional environments—military, VA, healthcare, corrections, counseling, law enforcement, or civic settings—while maintaining their full standing, accountability, and covenantal ties to the annual conference.

Endorsement

The Church's formal affirmation that a clergyperson is spiritually grounded, professionally qualified, ethically trustworthy, and ecclesially accountable to serve in a specialized institutional context. Endorsement is not a separate credential but a Connectional responsibility required by institutions that rely on denominational recognition. It complements episcopal appointment by ensuring that clergy serving beyond congregational settings carry the Church's explicit support.

Superintendency / General Superintendency

The constitutional authority entrusted solely to bishops to oversee the life, doctrine, mission, and ministry of the Church. General superintendency includes supervisory responsibility for all clergy under appointment. While certain supportive functions may be delegated, superintendency itself is inseparable from the episcopal office and cannot be transferred to an agency or committee.

Episcopal Oversight

The relational and supervisory work exercised by bishops on behalf of the Church's mission. For endorsed clergy—who often serve far from congregational or conference structures—episcopal oversight requires specialized support, institutional interpretation, and ongoing Connectional engagement. This oversight is assisted by functional bodies but remains the bishop's responsibility by virtue of office.

Connectional Accountability

The covenant that binds clergy to their annual conference, to their bishop, and to the Discipline. Endorsed clergy remain accountable to the same supervisory processes, ethical standards, and ecclesial relationships as colleagues in congregational appointments. Their institutional context does not diminish their Connectional identity.

Annual Conference Membership

The locus of clergy identity, governance, and accountability within United Methodism. Endorsed clergy remain members in full connection or in their respective orders,

participating in the life of the conference even while deployed in institutional ministries beyond its geographical boundaries.

Functional Ministry Terms

Functional Ministry

A ministry the Church is obligated to carry out institutionally in order to sustain its commitments to clergy, congregations, partner institutions, and the public trust. Functional ministries exist because the Church *must* fulfill certain responsibilities. Endorsed ministry is functional because clergy cannot serve in many institutional settings without formal ecclesial partnership and structured oversight.

Programmatic Ministry

A ministry that provides initiatives, services, curricula, or resources designed to strengthen or enrich the Church's life. Programmatic ministries may evolve with strategy or emphasis. They differ from functional ministries in that they are discretionary rather than essential to clergy accountability or institutional engagement.

Delegated Responsibility

A specific set of support functions—endorsement, institutional liaison, credentialing guidance, advisory consultation—entrusted to a designated office or body to assist bishops in fulfilling their supervisory duties. Delegated responsibility extends episcopal capacity but does not create supervisory authority outside the episcopal system.

Institutional Liaison

A form of relational ministry in which the Church maintains its presence and credibility within civic, governmental, or professional environments. Liaison work involves interpreting the Church to institutions and institutions to the Church, ensuring that endorsed clergy can navigate systems such as the Department of Defense, the VA, healthcare networks, correctional systems, or accrediting bodies.

Credentialing Support

The assistance provided to clergy as they meet institutional, federal, or professional standards required for service. This includes preparing documentation, advising bishops and clergy on eligibility requirements, and ensuring that ecclesial standing aligns with institutional expectations. Credentialing support is a core element of endorsement and cannot be outsourced to congregational structures.

Institutional Context (United States)

The civic and regulatory environment in which endorsed ministry operates. U.S. institutions—governmental, military, clinical, or correctional—require explicit ecclesial recognition, professional qualifications, and sustained denominational partnership. This context shapes the functional nature of endorsed ministry and underscores the need for specialized support.

Frontier Ministry

A form of ordained service carried out at the boundary where the Church's witness intersects with civic authority, professional ethics, and public trust. Frontier ministry highlights the distinctive pressures, responsibilities, and opportunities clergy encounter in institutional settings and underscores why endorsement requires dedicated structures of support.

Extension Ministry (Historical and Polity Usage)

A designation within the Book of Discipline for clergy appointments beyond local congregational settings, including chaplaincy, education, counseling, denominational service, and other specialized forms of ministry. Historically, endorsed ministry has been understood as a subset of extension ministry, sharing the same covenantal grounding in annual conference membership and episcopal appointment. While institutional endorsement adds layers of professional and ecclesial responsibility beyond many extension ministries, the broader category underscores that ordained service in non-congregational settings is a longstanding and normative expression of Methodist deployment.

Regionalization & Structural Terms

Regionalization (UMC Context)

The constitutional framework through which the Church authorizes regional bodies to adapt specified portions of the Discipline to their missional and contextual needs. Regionalization does not diminish Connectional unity; it strengthens the Church's ability to respond faithfully to the realities of governance, ministry, and culture within each region.

U.S. Regional Conference

The emerging body authorized through the ratified constitutional amendments to address adaptable portions of the Discipline within the United States context. Its development will unfold across multiple quadrennia. Once fully organized, it will provide the venue in which many questions of functional ministry alignment may appropriately be discerned.

Adaptable Portions of the Discipline

Sections of the Book of Discipline that may be modified by regional bodies without global action. These include matters related to conference organization, ministry support, and certain administrative structures. The future relationship of endorsed ministry to regional structures may fall within these adaptable categories.

Jurisdictional Conferences

Existing U.S. bodies that elect and assign bishops and help sustain the connectional life of the Church. Under regionalization, jurisdictions retain their current powers and responsibilities but do not possess adaptive legislative authority.

General Agencies

Connectional bodies established to support the global mission of the Church through administration, education, discipleship, leadership deployment, advocacy, and specialized functions. The current placement of endorsement within GBHEM reflects this framework and provides a reference point for future alignment considerations.

Interim Committee on Organization (ICO)

The transitional committee charged with organizing the first session of the U.S. Regional Conference. The ICO will shape the administrative foundation of the Region, creating the structures within which future conversations about functional alignment—including endorsement—may take place.

Organizational & Historical Terms

Commission on Chaplains (1941–1972)

The episcopally created body responsible for recruiting, supervising, and supporting Methodist clergy serving in the Armed Forces during and after World War II. It represents the clearest historical model of episcopal partnership in institutional ministry and remains foundational to understanding the ecclesial character of endorsement.

Endorsing Body / Endorsing Agency

The structure designated to assess clergy readiness, maintain institutional relationships, and uphold the Church's commitments to external organizations. The United Methodist Endorsing Agency presently fulfills this role, navigating both ecclesial and institutional expectations.

Ecclesial Support Structure

The web of relationships, offices, and responsibilities—including episcopal oversight, conference accountability, and delegated support—that sustains clergy serving in settings not directly governed by congregational life.

Episcopal Partnership Model

The collaborative approach in which bishops and delegated support bodies work together to ensure that clergy in institutional settings receive supervision, advocacy, pastoral care, and ecclesial accountability appropriate to their context. This model undergirds both historical and contemporary approaches to endorsement.

Administrative Realignment (1972)

The restructuring of the Church that placed the Methodist Commission on Chaplains within GBHEM. This administrative transfer did not alter the underlying ecclesial responsibility for oversight, which remains vested in the episcopal office.

Meta-Concepts

Discernment

The prayerful and collaborative process through which the Church considers questions of structure, identity, and mission. Discernment requires patience, humility, and openness, and is central to the tone and purpose of this white paper.

Functional Alignment

The process of assessing how a ministry's essential responsibilities are best situated within existing or emerging structures. Functional alignment seeks not to prescribe outcomes but to ensure that responsibilities are fulfilled faithfully and effectively.

Ecclesial Identity

The theological and relational understanding that clergy remain fully part of the Church—its accountability, its governance, and its mission—regardless of where they serve. Ecclesial identity grounds the covenantal nature of endorsed ministry.

APPENDIX II — TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Authoritative Sources Informing the Analysis and Claims of This White Paper

Purpose Statement

This appendix identifies the primary constitutional, disciplinary, historical, regional, and institutional authorities that inform the analysis presented in this white paper. Because the paper is written as a narrative theological rationale, it does not cite sources inline. The authoritative foundations listed below provide grounding for its major claims and offer readers clear reference points within the Church’s constitutional, historical, and institutional tradition.

I. Constitutional and Disciplinary Foundations

1. The Constitution of The United Methodist Church

Authority: Constitutional articles defining the episcopacy, general superintendency, and the Church’s governance structure.

Relevance: Grounds the non-delegable nature of episcopal oversight and establishes the framework for all supervisory claims.

Referenced in White Paper: III.B; VII.A; VIII.A–C.

2. Book of Discipline ¶ 403 — “The Ministry of the Bishop”

Authority: Defines episcopal leadership as guarding doctrine, ordering the life of the Church, and overseeing clergy and mission.

Relevance: Supports claims that endorsed clergy remain under episcopal responsibility regardless of ministry context.

Referenced in White Paper: III.B; VII.A; VIII.A.

3. Book of Discipline ¶ 415 — “The Superintendency”

Authority: Details the constitutional responsibilities of bishops in exercising general oversight of Church ministries.

Relevance: Anchors assertions regarding the supervisory nature of endorsed ministry.

Referenced in White Paper: III.B; VII.A–C.

4. Book of Discipline ¶¶ 337–343 — “Appointments Beyond the Local Church”

Authority: Governs clergy appointments to ministries outside congregational settings.

Relevance: Provides the disciplinary basis for recognizing endorsed ministry as an appointed ministry.

Referenced in White Paper: Sections II; III.A; VI; VIII.

5. Book of Discipline ¶ 101 — “General Book of Discipline and Adaptability”

Authority: Establishes which portions of the Discipline are adaptable by regional bodies.

Relevance: Supports discussions regarding regional legislative scope.

Referenced in White Paper: V; VI; VII.D.

6. Book of Discipline ¶ 543.7 — Powers of Central Conferences

Authority: Describes the adaptive authority of regional bodies outside the U.S.

Relevance: Provides precedent for U.S. regional adaptability under the newly ratified amendments.

Referenced in White Paper: V; VI; VII.D.

II. Historical Foundations

7. Early Methodist Ministry Patterns (Pre-1941)

Authority: The well-documented historic Methodist practice of deploying clergy into civic, military, medical, and institutional settings.

Relevance: Demonstrates that ministry beyond congregational life is deeply rooted in Methodist tradition.

Referenced in White Paper: IV.A; VIII.C.

8. World War I Protestant Chaplaincy Coordination

Authority: The recognized ecumenical framework through which major denominations affirmed clergy for federal service.

Relevance: Establishes the origin of formal ecclesiastical endorsement for institutional chaplaincy.

Referenced in White Paper: IV.B; VI.A.

9. Methodist Commission on Chaplains (1941–1972)

Authority: The episcopally established body responsible for endorsement, support, and oversight of chaplains during and after World War II.

Relevance: Historically grounds the episcopal partnership model at the heart of endorsed ministry.

Referenced in White Paper: IV.C; VII.C; VIII.C.

10. 1972 Administrative Realignment

Authority: The general church restructuring that consolidated boards and placed chaplaincy support within GBHEM.

Relevance: Confirms that administrative changes did not alter the ecclesial nature of endorsed ministry.

Referenced in White Paper: IV.D–E; VII.C.

III. Regionalization and Structural Authorities

11. 2024 Ratified Constitutional Amendments (Regionalization)

Authority: Amendments approved by General Conference and ratified by annual conferences.

Relevance: Creates the structural basis for a U.S. Regional Conference and the adaptive framework for future ministries.

Referenced in White Paper: V; VI; VII.D.

12. Connectional Table — Legislative Overview for the U.S. Regional Conference

Authority: GC-authorized interpretive framework describing the purpose, function, and implementation stages of the U.S. Region.

Relevance: Clarifies timing, scope, and boundaries for U.S. regional development.

Referenced in White Paper: V; VI; VII.D.

Source File: USRegConf Narrative — Legislative Overview (PDF).

13. “Regionalization Is Ratified” — Interpretive Summary

Authority: Widely circulated theological-policy analysis explaining implications of the 2024 amendments.

Relevance: Supports the paper’s caution regarding timing and scope of structural discernment.

Referenced in White Paper: V; VI; VII.D–F.

IV. Institutional and Professional Authorities

*(All items in this section intentionally reference **categories** of authority rather than single documents, reflecting the nature of institutional requirements.)*

14. U.S. Military Chaplaincy Requirements

Authority: Department of Defense regulations and service-branch requirements that mandate formal denominational endorsement.

Relevance: Establish that endorsement is essential for participation in federal chaplaincy.

Referenced in White Paper: II; III.A–B; VI.A.

15. Department of Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy Standards

Authority: VA professional standards requiring endorsement, ecclesial accountability, and ongoing denominational support.

Relevance: Reinforces that endorsed ministry is a required and regulated function within federal institutional settings.

Referenced in White Paper: II; III.A; VI.A.

16. Professional Standards for Clinical and Correctional Chaplaincy

Authority: Accreditation and credentialing requirements across major professional associations (e.g., clinical pastoral care, correctional systems).

Relevance: Demonstrate that clergy serving in institutional contexts must have structured ecclesial support and endorsement.

Referenced in White Paper: II; III.A; VI.A.

17. Institutional Expectations Across U.S. Agencies

Authority: The common, cross-institutional requirement that clergy serving in governmental, healthcare, military, or correctional environments maintain denominational endorsement and standing.

Relevance: Confirms that endorsed ministry is a functional necessity arising from institutional norms, not a discretionary program.

Referenced in White Paper: II; III.B; VI.B.

V. Terminological and Ecclesial Usage Authorities

18. Methodist Usage of “Secretary,” “Executive Secretary,” “Executive Director,” and “General Secretary”

Authority: Historical Methodist nomenclature used to describe leadership roles within Connectional bodies.

Relevance: Supports distinctions made in Appendix III regarding the present and future titling of endorsement leadership.

Referenced in White Paper: Appendix III; Sections VII–VIII.

19. Disciplinary and Historical Usage of “Extension Ministry”

Authority: The longstanding disciplinary category used for clergy appointed beyond local church settings.

Relevance: Provides the ecclesial grounding for understanding endorsed ministry as part of the historic pattern of Methodist deployment.

Referenced in White Paper: II; Glossary; VII.A–C.

VI. Experiential and Interpretive Sources

20. The Author’s Professional Experience

Authority: Direct experience in military chaplaincy, denominational administration, and endorsed ministry.

Relevance: Informs portions of the narrative analysis where firsthand knowledge and historical observation are relevant.

Referenced Throughout: I–III; VIII–IX.

APPENDIX III — NOMENCLATURE AND EXECUTIVE TITLES

Interpretive Notes on Executive Titling Within Methodist Polity and Its Implications for Endorsed Ministry

Introduction

The titles used within The United Methodist Church to describe officers, executives, and functional leaders are never incidental. Methodist nomenclature carries theological, historical, and organizational weight. Titles convey not only what a role *does*, but also how it is situated within the Connection, to whom it is accountable, and what ecclesial authority it implies.

As regional structures emerge and the Church reflects on the future of endorsed ministry, it is useful to clarify how certain titles have been used across Methodist history and how they may be understood in the context of functional ministries that assist the episcopacy.

This appendix does *not* propose or anticipate specific structural changes; it simply provides interpretive guidance that can help the Church understand the language associated with offices that support endorsed ministry.

I. Methodist Patterns of Executive Titling

Across the history of Methodist organizational life, several titles have developed distinct meanings. While their usage has evolved, their theological and functional resonance remains consistent.

1. Secretary

Historically, “Secretary” was a prominent title among early Methodist societies, boards, and missionary bodies. It denoted a senior officer responsible for the work of a ministry or program area and was often the primary administrator of an organized Methodist effort. The title conveyed responsibility, trust, and proximity to episcopal leadership without implying general supervisory authority.

2. Executive Secretary

With the growth of denominational structures in the twentieth century, “Executive Secretary” became a standard title for the lead officer of a board, division, or specialized ministry. The title signaled:

- broader administrative scope,
- responsibility for interpreting the ministry to the Connection, and
- a role that functioned in partnership with episcopal or board-level oversight.

3. General Secretary

Today, “General Secretary” identifies the chief executive of a general agency. It conveys:

- denominational scope,
- supervisory authority over staff and program areas,
- responsibility for strategic direction, and
- accountability to the agency’s board of directors.

This title is reserved for high-level, Connectional leadership within the Church’s general agencies.

4. Executive Director

“Executive Director” is commonly used for leaders of commissions, offices, and specialized ministries—particularly those with focused functional mandates. This title signals:

- delegated responsibility,
- administrative leadership within a specific scope,
- an outward-facing role with external partners, and
- accountability to a board, episcopal body, or supervising agency.

It is structurally more modest than “General Secretary” but more encompassing than a purely managerial title.

II. The Current Title: Director of the United Methodist Endorsing Agency

Within GBHEM, the leader of the United Methodist Endorsing Agency is titled **Director**. This title reflects:

- the agency’s present administrative location within a division of GBHEM,
- the functional nature of the work (endorsement, liaison, credentialing support), and
- the expectation of external institutions (military, VA, healthcare systems) that the head of an endorsing body carries a recognizable, professional title.

“Director” therefore expresses:

- clear administrative leadership,
- accountability within the GBHEM structure,
- but *not* general agency–level ecclesial authority.

The title aligns with the functional and delegated nature of endorsement support.

III. Nomenclature Considerations in a Regional Context

If the Church eventually reconsiders the structural placement of endorsed ministry within or alongside emerging U.S. regional bodies, questions of nomenclature will naturally arise. Any future title must serve two purposes:

- **Ecclesial clarity** — helping the Church understand the relationship of the office to the episcopacy and to Connectional oversight.
- **Institutional clarity** — ensuring external bodies continue to recognize the role as the legitimate denominational head of endorsement.

While no recommendation is made here, it may be helpful to outline two broad patterns the Church has used historically:

1. Titles Reflecting Delegated Ecclesial Responsibility

If endorsed ministry were aligned closely with episcopal collaboration or regional supervisory bodies, titles such as:

- **Executive Director for Endorsed Ministries**, or
- **Secretary for Endorsed Ministries**

could align with the historic Methodist pattern for specialized offices serving under or alongside episcopal authority. These titles do not carry general agency jurisdiction but do reflect ecclesial entrustment and delegated function.

2. Titles Reflecting Administrative or Functional Leadership

If the Church maintains the current administrative pattern of endorsement being housed within a wider agency, titles such as:

- **Director**,
- **Executive Director**, or
- **Chief of Chaplaincy Services** (in some traditions)

would continue to signal functional scope and institutional interface without conveying supervisory ecclesial authority.

IV. Nomenclature as a Discernment Tool, Not a Directive

The purpose of this appendix is not to propose a title or anticipate future organizational outcomes. Titles arise from structure—not the other way around. When the Church's structural placement of endorsed ministry becomes clearer in the future U.S. Regional Conference, naming conventions will emerge naturally.

For now, what is helpful is to recognize that titles:

- interpret responsibility,
- signal ecclesial location and accountability,
- shape institutional expectations,
- and express the kind of ministry the office is called to execute.

Clear nomenclature enhances ecclesial transparency and strengthens the Church's partnership with the institutions in which endorsed clergy serve.