



*A National Standard-Bearer for Islamic Chaplaincy*

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In the Name of Allah the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

# Annual Report 2023

All Praise and Gratitude are due to Allah.

During the 2023 reporting period, two new members were welcomed to the MEC Board of Directors, Chaplain Patricia Anton and Chaplain, Rafael D. Lantigua, Jr.

We are delighted to report that MEC endorsees continue to progress in their respective areas of chaplaincy. Many of MEC's healthcare chaplains have received their board certification, others are working toward it. One of MEC's corrections chaplains has completed his 10th year of service in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Others are going beyond their chaplaincy responsibilities by teaching, writing articles, co-authoring books/chapters, and writing research papers that all contribute to the sustained development of Islamic chaplaincy.

MEC has developed a Rubric for its five core competencies and formally articulated the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) mapping. These two documents will provide a transparent and consistent means of evaluating applicants for MEC endorsement. These will also be used in reviewing and optimizing the MEC endorsement process and conveying standards for endorsement. MEC's goal is to publish the organization's work in hopes it will serve as a support and resource for seminaries, chaplains, and endorsement bodies.

## **MEC continues to endorse qualified chaplains.**

MEC continued to follow up on the annual reporting of their endorsed chaplains to ensure that they continue to meet the terms of their endorsement and maintain their professional development. This included retrieving annual background checks and requiring them to submit Annual Accountability for Ethical Conduct Statements in line with the standard held by the Association of Professional Chaplains.

MEC continued its pursuit to become an endorser with the Department of Defense (DOD).

MEC signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Islamic Society of North America Chaplaincy Services Department (ICSD) in 2021 and renewed the agreement into 2024. According to the agreement, MEC will continue to advise ISNA (ICSD) on standards. MEC will process the ISNA chaplaincy applications per the agreed-upon ISNA application form and will conduct annual reviews of all ISNA-endorsed Muslim Chaplains. MEC will make endorsement recommendations to



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ISNA (ICSD), and based upon these recommendations, ISNA (ICSD) will determine the endorsement status of chaplaincy applicants and chaplains' ongoing endorsement statuses. MEC will develop and coordinate annual ICSD training for Muslim chaplains during the ISNA Annual Convention weekend.

*The MEC Scholar* is a TISA scholarship program that grants eligible chaplaincy students full-tuition scholarships. MEC entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA) on February 10, 2022. The organizations will collaborate to identify outstanding candidates for TISA's chaplaincy scholarship program by cross-promoting information regarding the scholarship with each other's name, logo, information, services, and events on its digital advertising, website, social media, email marketing, mailings, offline promotions, events, affiliate marketing, and public relations platforms.

MEC is pleased to announce its collaboration with TISA on the publication of *The Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*. The 6<sup>th</sup> edition theme focuses on Advancing Islamic Chaplaincy in North America. This publication aims to bring together diverse perspectives and innovative research in Islamic Chaplaincy. We invite submissions of papers that combine intellectual rigor with community engagement and are subject to a double-blind peer review. February 2025 is the planned publication date. All submissions are accepted via email: [journal@islamicseminary.us](mailto:journal@islamicseminary.us).

MEC orchestrated the first meeting of The Roundtable of Seminaries on September 3, 2022, in Chicago. This is a group of leaders and faculties representing seminaries throughout the United States that educate Muslim chaplains. The purpose of this group is to give feedback as MEC pursues standards for competency in Islamic chaplaincy. This group is also exploring the development of an Islamic Seminary Consortium. The group is represented by The American Islamic College (AIC), Bayan Islamic Graduate School, Boston Islamic Seminary (BIS), Hartford International University (HIU), and The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA). MEC continues actively meeting and working with The Roundtable of Seminaries on the objectives.

MEC, in association with TISA, convened its Annual Islamic Leadership Conference for Imams, Chaplains, and Lay Leaders on March 4, 2023, at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. The theme was "Building Core Competencies" and Alhamdulillah, it was successful as a crucial first step towards defining and setting standards for Islamic chaplaincy. The full-day conference consisted of lectures, workshops, presentations, and a keynote speaker, Professor Ingrid Mattson, who addressed *The Importance of Setting Religious and Professional Standards*. This was a historical review of MEC's Five Core Competencies of MEC (Quranic Literacy, Prophetic Theory & Praxis, Cross-Cultural Capability, Facilitation Skills, and Professional Theory & Practice) by several seminaries, chaplains from various areas of chaplaincy, and religious leaders.



*A National Standard-Bearer for Islamic Chaplaincy*

**MEC continues with annual training as a Continuous Education program.**

MEC is currently recognized by the College of Pastoral Supervision & Psychotherapy (CPSP), the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), the Association of Professional Chaplains/Board of Chaplaincy Certification (APC/BCC), the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), and has a pending application with the Department of Defense (DOD).

In May 2023, MEC became a member of the Association of Professional Chaplains Common Council, a group of endorsers for all faiths striving to uphold the integrity of chaplaincy endorsement. MEC's president is on the Board of the Association of Religious Endorsing Bodies (AREB), a group of endorsers from all faiths working together to define and set standards for endorsement.

**MEC conducted on-site job visits of two endorsees**

The purpose of job site visits:

- To observe the occupational experiences of our chaplains in their specific area of chaplaincy.
- To gain knowledge for developing effective training and education for our chaplains.
- To connect with and get feedback from their supervisors and colleagues.
- To make institutions aware that MEC is there to support their endorsees.

Two MEC Board members visited Westchester Medical Center, NY. The observation included meeting with several representatives of the medical center including the endorsed chaplain's supervisor, and the Palliative care team, speaking with the director of the Behavioral Health Center, and engaging with fellow chaplains. MEC also visited the Federal Corrections Institution in PA, to conduct an endorsee observation for a corrections chaplain. This is a different institutional environment from the medical center. As expected, security is a high priority. In this environment, a chaplain deals with many different types of Muslims, among them Salafi, Shi'a, and Sunni of various madhatib, and the chaplain must have knowledge of all these groups and the wisdom to inspire and counsel all. As with the healthcare chaplains, the corrections chaplain will also care for non-Muslims. This requires that chaplains understand the boundaries of their faith and their responsibilities as chaplains. Chaplains are not expected to compromise the tenets of their religion therefore they have the option to perform or provide (perform the function directly or provide someone who can).