







A National Standard-Bearer for Islamic Chaplaincy

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Inc.**

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MEC Annual Report 2024

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

All Praise and Gratitude are due to Allah

The 2024 reporting period was significant for its continuing efforts, activities, and achievements for MEC and the chaplains we support.

OVERVIEW

In addition to our primary mission of evaluating and endorsing chaplain and ensuring that they maintain their Endorsement, we maintain recognition with various chaplaincy bodies and agencies. We continued working with the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Islamic Society of North America Chaplaincy Services Department (ICSD) and in our pursuit of becoming an endorser with the Department of Defense (DOD).

Further, we continued maintaining The MEC Scholar at The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA) and are in the process of developing an Islamic Higher Education Consortium (IHEC) with The Roundtable of Seminaries and maintained our engagement with the Association of Professional Chaplains Common Council.

We built on these continuing efforts by welcoming Chaplains Zubair Yousif and Saleha Jabeen to our team. Some of our healthcare chaplains achieved board certification, while others are actively working towards it.

Further, we contributed to the AMC Members Conference through a workshop highlighting our core competencies and endorsement process and developed and introduced a new LGBTQ+ policy to ensure inclusive care. We formed a new partnership with Ziyara Muslim Spiritual Care for training programs and hosted a Virtual In-Service Training that addressed "Complex Trauma."

Our president visited institutions to support our chaplains where they worked. We continued our scholarship program for prospective chaplains at TISA. We participated in a workshop to explore the feasibility of an Islamic accrediting body while working on the 6th Edition of The Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice, which will be published in early 2025, in-sha-Allah. Lastly, we modified our Rubric.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ch Shazeeda Khan
•President

Imam Dr Salahuddin Muhammad
•Vice President

Ch Rafael Lantigua
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Br. Aqil Hashim
•Secretary

Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim
•Member

Ch Zubair Yousef
•Member

CONTINUED WORK

Endorsement and Annual Reporting

MEC continued to endorse qualified chaplains. It also followed up on the annual reporting of our endorsed chaplains to ensure that they continued to meet the terms of their Endorsement and maintain their professional development. This included retrieving yearly 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.

Recognition

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).

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Islamic Society of North America Chaplaincy Services Department (ICSD)

MEC continued its Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Islamic Society of North America Chaplaincy Services Department (ICSD). 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 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 at the ISNA Annual Convention weekend.

Department of Defense

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

MEC Scholar

The MEC Scholar is a TISA 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 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.

The Roundtable of Seminaries

MEC organized 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. This group gave feedback as MEC pursues standards for competency in Islamic chaplaincy. 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). This group is now exploring the development feasibility of the Islamic Higher Education Consortium (IHEC).

Common Council & Association of Religious Endorsing Bodies

MEC continued engagement with 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.

NEW FOR 2024

New Members

Chaplain Zubair Yousif, the new representative from the Association of Muslim Chaplains, joined our board, and Chaplain Saleha Jabeen is the latest addition to our Advisory Board.

Board Certification

We continue to be impressed by our endorsees, who progress in their respective areas of chaplaincy. The majority of MEC's healthcare chaplains have received their board certification; others are working toward it. Many MEC-endorsed chaplains go beyond their chaplaincy responsibilities by teaching, writing, and contributing to research.

AMC Members Conference

MEC's Secretary, Aqil Hashim, was a panelist at the *AMC Members Conference 2024: Integrating Faith & Practice* on Endorsement. The presentation included MEC's Core Competencies for Endorsement, the Rubric, Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), and the application process. MEC was also a co-sponsor of the conference.

LGBTQ+ policy

In January, MEC ratified and released its LGBTQ+ policy, written by MEC's Treasurer, Chaplain Rafael Lantigua. The basis of which states: *We expect our chaplains to continue providing individual client-centered pastoral care and spiritual counseling for members of the LGBTQ community; however, they are not permitted to perform or provide certain functions—to include but not limited to—same-sex marriage counseling, same-sex premarital counseling; same-sex marriage retreats, and same-sex weddings.*

New Partnership

In March 2024, MEC formed a new collaboration with Ziyara Muslim Spiritual Care ziyara.org. Ziyara is a non-profit organization led by its founder, Dr. Kamal Abu-Shamsieh. It focuses on spiritual care literacy and trains spiritual care providers who cater to diverse communities and religious and ethnic backgrounds, especially vulnerable ones.

Training Workshop

On June 23, 2024, MEC conducted its *Virtual interactive In-Service Training Program for Chaplains*. The theme was *Providing Spiritual Support for Complex Trauma*. The keynote address was about *Complex & Vicarious Trauma*, given by Dr Hamada Hamid. Dr Ch Abdus Salaam Musa & Iman Dr M Hatim conducted the Practical Skills Workshop. Several chaplains presented on Complex Trauma Across Different Settings. These were chaplains Tamer Sayedahmed, Mustafa Boz, Raymond Elias, and Ailya Vajid. Professor James Jones of The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA) moderated. The training was capped at 22 chaplains. The participants overwhelmingly evaluated the training as effective and relevant.

Islamic accrediting organization

The President of MEC, Shazeeda Khan, was invited by Dr Nancy Khalil, Assistant Professor, Arab & Muslim American Studies Program, Department of American Culture at Michigan University, to attend the Muslim Higher Education Accreditation Board

(MHEAB) Convening at Michigan University. The meeting explored the feasibility of developing an Islamic accrediting organization. Khan presented MEC's core competencies for Endorsement and the corresponding Rubric.

Onsite Job Visits

MEC conducted onsite job visits for 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

In August, Shazeeda Khan visited the MEC-endorsed healthcare chaplain at UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, TX. His workday involved getting handoff information from the chaplain, conducting regular rounds, making ER visits, visiting new patients, and having informal interdisciplinary chats throughout the day. His supervisor expressed how impressed they are with his dedication to his patients and his awareness and ability to function in many different situations. In October Khan visited the Federal Correctional Institution, Milan, MI, to observe the MEC-endorsed correction chaplain. Khan asked his supervisor, "What is the most important qualification for a Muslim chaplain in this job?"

His answer:

- ◇ Most important for a Muslim chaplain to be well-versed in Islam
- ◇ One who can work with people of other faiths
- ◇ Understand the environment
- ◇ Knows professional and religious boundaries

MEC's endorsed chaplains are both religiously and professionally qualified. There is no substitute for being on the job site, observing the environment, and speaking to colleagues and supervisors to understand how best to support our chaplains.

Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice

MEC has collaborated with TISA to publish *The Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice*, 6th Edition. The theme of the 6th Edition 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. Early 2025 is the planned publication date.

Modifying the Rubric

Developing and completing the MEC Rubric for its five core competencies in 2023 enabled the formal implementation in 2024 in evaluating new applicants. The board found that the practical application of the Rubric brought focus, order, and consistency to the interview process. However, one modification was made. The board eliminated the analysis of the autobiography in terms of writing ability. The reason for elimination is the possibility of applicants having aid in composing their autobiography. The MEC Rubric and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) mechanisms will continue to be valuable in reviewing and optimizing the MEC endorsement process and conveying standards for Endorsement. MEC's goal to publish the organization's work in hopes it will serve as a support and resource for seminaries, chaplains, and endorsement bodies will come to fruition in the *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice*, 6th Edition.