

Top 10 Ways to Wreck Your Candidacy Process

By Meg Lassiatt with Deborah Bushfield*

- 10. Make all your decisions on your own; don't ask others for advice. Don't start candidacy until you're absolutely sure you want to be ordained.**

Although this sounds like typical advice, it's actually counter-productive. The entire candidacy process is designed to help you decide how you are called to serve. You will have the opportunity to sort through all your options with the assistance of a trained candidacy mentor, and it's truly OKAY to use this as a time for discernment. Also – FYI – in some conferences, you must be a certified candidate before you're eligible to receive seminary scholarships and loans.

- 9. Jump to the conclusion that becoming a certified candidate commits you to becoming ordained.**

The candidacy process is simply the first step in searching out your options. It *is* the official doorway into United Methodist ordained ministry, but you don't need to make a lifetime decision this early in the process. This is a time of learning, growing, and discerning. It helps many people discover that while they may be called to some type of ministry, they aren't called to ordained ministry. It's better to figure this out early on – not after you're in debt from seminary, or are 5 years into your career and realize you're unhappy.

- 8. Decide that you already know exactly where you want to end up, instead of letting God teach you about your gifts and lead you into places where you might use those gifts.**

See number 9 above. Once you are a certified candidate, you can take up to 12 years to complete the process. This gives you plenty of time for learning and exploring different ministry settings. It also gives you time to work with your candidacy mentor, district committee, and others serving in full-time ministry. It's about learning, as you move toward a decision.

- 7. Treat the interview process as just another hoop you have to jump through. Wear your flip-flops and relax!**

The interviewers take their jobs seriously. They are giving up an entire day, or more, and doing a lot of extra reading—including your file and paperwork – in order to do a thorough job of examining the suitability of those who want to become ordained clergy. They expect interviewees to be professional.

- 6. Assume that you will get everything completed sooner or later. Ignore the candidacy timeline and detailed instructions, and choose which steps you want to follow.**

If you're not pro-active about keeping up with the requirements, you may miss a vital piece of info. Follow instructions carefully, and keep in close contact with your candidacy mentor and others. If you're not clear about what you're required to do and when to do it, ask your mentor, your DS, or your district committee.

- 5. Ignore deadlines and the details in your paperwork, and assume that someone else besides you is responsible for your own paper trail.**

Incomplete or inaccurate paperwork is a deal-breaker. And deadlines are just that. If you turn something in one day late, that's too late. It can delay you until the committee meets again to interview and vote on candidates –

pray

learn

serve

explore



sometimes that's a once-a-year event. In other words, being a day late can mean a year's delay. Keep track of the steps you've completed and make copies of all your paperwork. Bring your folder with those copies with you to each meeting (just in case the committee is missing something – paperwork can get lost).

4. Be relaxed about your calendar and don't worry about missing meetings with your candidacy mentor.

Work to resolve any scheduling conflicts you have. Candidacy mentors work voluntarily and out of an attitude of service. Your meetings with them need to take top priority on your to-do list.

3. Miss your appointment with the district committee or annual conference board of ordained ministry. They'll see to it that there's a way to make it up later.

The board keeps track of who is supposed to be interviewed. Each no-show is noted, and people who don't show up are referred to as those who have "self-selected" out of the process for the year. And there generally are no make-ups unless there is a dire emergency – even funerals or other pastoral duties don't always fit into this category.

2. If you're confused about anything, don't ask questions. Maybe you'll figure it out later.

Questions are expected, and it's up to you to ask them. Candidacy is a long process with many details to track, and occasionally people may leave out some essential piece of information. If this happens and you catch the error, you'll help not only yourself, but others.

And Finally, the Number One Way to Wreck Your Candidacy Process

1. Wait until your last year of seminary and assume that about the time you graduate, you can start the candidacy process, and the bishop will give you an immediate appointment.

As soon as you decide you may want to be ordained, get in touch with your District Superintendent about enrolling in the candidacy process. Ideally this will be before your *junior year in college*; if not, contact your DS as soon as you make the decision. You need the district committee's and a mentor's assistance to obtain the correct info, paperwork, and requirements for ordination. If you're not proactive about starting the process and faithfully sticking with it, the committee has no way of knowing your intentions. Help them to help you make the best decision for your life.

The Rev. Meg Lassiat is the director of student ministries, vocation and enlistment, the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Deborah Bushfield is a freelance writer who is a lifelong United Methodist and the co-author of the book, *Things They Never Taught You in Seminary* (Herald Press).

Copyright © 2007 by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church [Terms of Use](#)

pray

learn

serve

explore

