

# REV. SAMUEL G. ALEXANDER

## Personal Information Form

238 Ridgeway Avenue, Fairfax, CA 94930 • Phone: 415-302-0677 • Email: gracecomesfirst@gmail.com

*I am seeking a call as a short term pastor.* I believe my training, experience and aptitudes prepare me for this work. My greatest strength is preaching, preaching that calls people to deepen their faith and engages them in conversation as they work through their questions and doubts, but I do bring more to the table. In brief: I work very well with staff and find that people generally enjoy working with me as I look for ways to maximize their strengths. Those who know me will tell you that I'm not judgmental. They would also say that I'm very good at encouraging others as I see the spark of life in them, even when they may not see it themselves. I am a "systems thinker" which is useful in understanding a congregation and its leadership. It allows me to help them articulate their purpose and direction in hopeful and encouraging terms. I'll be up front; in long term called positions I have had some difficulty letting go of my own hopes and dreams for a particular church—my ego got in the way and it did not end well. But that was a long time ago. I am confident it will not happen in a short term pastor position. I look forward to doing an excellent job for a congregation that would like to deepen their faith as they prepare for the next phase of ministry together.

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### ECCLESIASTICAL STATUS

I am a member, in good standing, of Presbytery of the Redwoods. I was ordained by the National Capital Presbytery on August 14, 1994.

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### CERTIFICATION TRAINING

Interim - Transitional Ministry Training

Week I Site: 2001 - Synod of the Northwest

Week II Site: 2005 - Union Theological Seminary (Now Union Presbyterian Seminary)

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### EMPLOYMENT TYPE DESIRED

Open to either Full Time or Part Time employment, probably as an Interim Pastor.

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### PREVIOUS PASTORAL EXPERIENCE

Years of Experience	Position Type
6	Solo Pastor
8	Head of Staff (supervised one teaching elder and other staff)
2	Pastor Interim

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**GEOGRAPHIC CHOICES (SELECT ONE):**

I am open; suggest my name anywhere in the USA \_\_\_X\_\_\_

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**LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES**

Permitted to Pick Only 10

<b>THEOLOGICAL – SPIRITUAL INTERPRETER</b>		
X	<b>Compassionate</b> - having the ability to suffer with others; being motivated by others pain and is called into action as advocate; is motivated by caring for others while concurrently keeping the organizational goals clearly in focus.	<b>Hopeful</b> - maintains stability in the moment and hope for the future; provides direction, guidance, and faith when describing basic needs; and helps followers to see a way through chaos and complexity.
X	<b>Preaching and Worship Leadership:</b> Is a consistently effective preacher and worship leader; is able to inspire from the pulpit; communicates a clear and consistent message through sermons that are carefully prepared and artfully delivered; projects the identity and character of the congregation through worship leadership presence.	X <b>Spiritual Maturity:</b> Shows strong personal depth and spiritual grounding; demonstrates integrity by walking the talk and by responding with faithfulness of purpose; is seen by others as trustworthy and authentic; nurtures a rich spiritual life; seeks the wisdom and guidance of appropriate mentors; is able to articulate a clear and consistent theology.
	<b>Lifelong Learner</b> - individuals who use every experience in life as a potential tool for growth; one who pursues continuing education; and those who build on strengths and seek assistance to improve weaknesses.	<b>Teacher:</b> Creates learning environments where students are active participants as individuals and as members of collaborative groups; designs lesson plans that teach concepts, facts, and theology; effectively uses multiple learning tools to reach a wide variety of learners; revises instructional strategies based upon ministry/organization context.
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>		
	<b>Communicator</b> - Advances the abilities of individuals and the organizations through active listening supported with meaningful oral and written presentation of information.	<b>Bilingual</b> - having the ability to use two languages, especially with equal or nearly equal fluency; able to use multiple languages in communication.
X	<b>Public Communicator</b> - Demonstrates a comfortable ease when speaking in a variety of settings (both small and large groups); is effective at addressing a variety of topics; can get messages across with the desired effect.	<b>Media Communicator:</b> Has experience developing materials for a variety of written or multimedia forms of communications (print, Internet-based, social media, etc.).
	<b>Technologically Savvy</b> - the ability to navigate successfully the world of technology using software, blogging, multi-media, and websites in ministry.	

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

	<b>Advisor</b> - an individual others turn to for counsel and guidance; provides coaching; expertise for congregations or other organizations.		<b>Change Agent</b> - having the ability to lead the change process successfully; anchoring the change in the congregations'/organizations' vision and mission.
X	<b>Contextualization</b> - the ability to assess accurately the context, environment, history, relationships and uniqueness of a congregation or organization.		<b>Culturally Proficient</b> - having solid understanding of the norms, values and common behaviors of various peoples, including direct experience working in multiple cultural and cross-cultural settings.
	<b>Externally Aware</b> - identifies and keeps informed of the polity of the church and/or the organization; maintains current with laws, regulations, policies, procedures, trends, and developments both internally and in the larger society.		<b>Entrepreneurial</b> - leaders that are creative in using resources; identifies opportunities to develop; is willing to take risks, initiates actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.
	<b>Risk Taker</b> - persons with the ability to take appropriate risk to accomplish needed goals; one who thinks outside the box and who is not afraid of challenging the status-quo.		<b>Task Manager</b> - Assures that effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization; holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities; can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget; and monitors and evaluates plans, focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.
	<b>Willingness to Engage Conflict:</b> Steps up to conflicts, seeing them as opportunities; reads situations quickly; good at focused listening; can identify common ground and elicit cooperation from others in crafting mutual solutions.	X	<b>Decision Making:</b> Makes effective decisions, balancing analysis, wisdom, experience, and judgment; is aware of the long term implications of choices made; is generally regarded as offering solutions and suggestions that are correct and effective.
X	<b>Organizational Agility:</b> Is astute about how congregations and/or organizations work; knows how to get things done through formal and informal channels; understands the importance of supporting good policy, practice, and procedure; appreciates the power in the culture of a congregation; is politically savvy.		<b>Strategy and Vision:</b> Sees ahead clearly, keeping focused on the larger picture; can anticipate future consequences and trends accurately; is future oriented; casts a compelling and inspired vision for a preferred future; sees possibility; crafts breakthrough strategies.
X	<b>Financial Manager</b> - deliver results by maximizing organizational effectiveness and sustainability through the best use of available financial resources; allocates and manages finances transparently; implements strategies to achieve operational efficiencies and value for money; puts in place rigorous and comprehensive financial accountability systems.		<b>Funds Developer</b> - maintains the ability to solicit donations used to fund the budget of the organization; effectively expresses the needs for funds to potential donors; responsible for adding new potential donors to the organization's contact list; prepares statement of planned activities and enlists support for mission initiatives.
	<b>Collaboration:</b> Has a natural orientation toward getting people to work together; shares wins and successes; fosters open dialogue; lets people finish and be responsible for their work; creates strong feelings of belonging among group members; is a good judge of talent and can accurately assess the strengths and limitations of others.		

INTERPERSONAL ENGAGEMENT	
X	<p><b>Interpersonal Engagement</b> - Displays a consistent ability to build solid relationships of trust and respect inside and outside of the organization; engage people, organizations, and partners in developing goals, executing plans, and delivering results; use negotiation skills and adaptability to encourage recognition of joint concerns, collaboration, and to influence the success of outcomes.</p>
	<p><b>Bridge Builder</b> - possessing a certain responsibility for the unity of the congregation and/or organization; works to connect people of different cultures, worldviews, and theological positions.</p>
	<p><b>Motivator</b> - Creates and sustains an organizational culture which permits others to provide the quality of service essential to high performance. Enables others to acquire the tools and support they need to perform well; and influences others toward a spirit of service and meaningful contributions to mission accomplishment.</p>
	<p><b>Personal Resilience:</b> Learns from adversity and failure; picks up on the need to change personal, interpersonal, and leadership behaviors; deals well with ambiguity; copes effectively with change; can decide and act without having the total picture; comfortably handles risk and uncertainty; seeks feedback; expresses personal regret when appropriate.</p>
	<p><b>Initiative:</b> Demonstrates ambition; is highly motivated; is action oriented and full of energy for things seen as challenging; seizes opportunity; pushes self and others to achieve desired results.</p>
X	<p><b>Flexibility</b> - Adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, unexpected obstacles, or ambiguity; remains open to new ideas and approaches; and works concurrently on related and conflicting priorities without losing focus or attention.</p>
	<p><b>Self Differentiation:</b> Demonstrates strong and appropriate personal boundaries in relationships; has a healthy appreciation of self, without being egotistical; is emotionally mature; can maintain a less- anxious presence in the midst of turmoil; is not overly dependent upon outside affirmation; works to build a strong personal support system.</p>

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## LANGUAGES IN WHICH YOU ARE FLUENT

(Please select all that apply):

I am fluent in English.

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## COMPENSATION AND HOUSING

Indicated below the total minimum salary and housing compensation you need.

(Effective salary is cash salary plus housing allowance or manse value).

Minimum *Effective Salary* Needed: *This is a difficult question to answer with a simple number. I can imagine working in any number of situations in a variety of geographic locations, probably part-time as I continue my part-time work at Ross Valley Ecumenical Housing Association, so that a minimum is difficult to arrive at. I will say that I intend to “commute” to an Interim position from my home in California, one of the most expensive economies in our nation. I can tell you that my compensation in San Rafael when I left was \$8.5K plus a shared equity arrangement on my home.*

Indicate the housing type you need:

Housing Type    Open to either Manse or Housing Allowance if the position is outside of California

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## CURRENT WORK EXPERIENCE

<i>2017 - Present</i>	<p><b><i>Ross Valley Ecumenical Housing Association (Tam House), San Anselmo, California</i></b></p> <p>I am currently the manager of Tam House, a non-profit providing low income housing for independent seniors. Working with an active and competent Board, I manage two houses with 21 residents. I collaborate in the development of policy, attend to the community – dealing with any conflict that may arise - collect rents, supervise a full-time cook, and take care of any maintenance needs the houses may have.</p>
<i>2003 - Present</i>	<p><b><i>San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, California. Position: Adjunct Instructor in Homiletics (Preaching).</i></b></p> <p>Teaching those who are just starting out as preachers requires the ability to encourage to be sure. More than that though, it requires a person who can see what it is the person wants to say. From that place the teacher can help a student organize or form the message such that it reaches into the lives of those who are listening. My work at SFTS has taught me how to train people to do that.</p>
<i>2005 - Present</i>	<p><b><i><u>gracecomesfirst.net</u>, San Anselmo, California.</i></b></p> <p>This is a web-based business serving pastors, congregations, and others in a variety of ways; among them I've been a Preaching Coach for the San Jose Dioceses and supply preaching.</p>
<i>2017 - Present</i>	<p><b><i>paincallsfortransformation.com, San Anselmo, California: Pain Coach</i></b></p> <p>I have been trained and certified by Michael Moskowitz, MD, MPH in both Neuroplastic methods of pain control and in the use of Medical Cannabis. Dr. Moskowitz is an internationally recognized leader in this field. I also received a certification in Cannabis Science from the University of Vermont. I coach people in the use of these and other methods to develop a comprehensive pain management plan.</p>

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## PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE CHURCH

<i>2007 - 2014</i>	<p><b><i>First Presbyterian Church of San Rafael, San Rafael, California. Head of Staff.</i></b></p> <p>My preaching here was unusually fruitful as my voice and theology matured. In addition to the demands of being a Pastor, my time here afforded me the opportunity to hone my supervision skills as I worked with a staff of 9. During my time we ran a successful capital campaign and subsequent building projects.</p>
<i>2005 - 2007</i>	<p><b><i>First Presbyterian Church of Burlingame, Burlingame, California. Interim Associate Pastor.</i></b></p> <p>First Burlingame was my first experience as an Executive Associate Pastor. This particular church had been experiencing what we might call “conflict.” I offered both humor and a clear sense of boundaries. I kept thinking I should walk around wearing a button saying, “ECD,” Everybody Calm Down. (It got them to smile.) Beyond that, this position played to my greatest strength—they needed enormous encouragement.</p>
<i>2004 - 2005</i>	<p><b><i>High Street Presbyterian Church, Oakland, California. Interim Pastor.</i></b></p> <p>I loved this very small congregation! We had amazing conversations in worship following the sermon and they encouraged me to experiment using multi-media in the worship service. A great year!</p>
<i>2004 - 2005</i>	<p><b><i>Alameda Presbyterian Church, Alameda, California. Youth Director</i></b></p>

	The young people of this congregation gave me hope for the future of the Church! I'll always treasure the opportunity to walk with them as they explored what it means to walk by faith.
<i>2001 - 2004</i>	<i>Old First Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, California. Position: Head of Staff</i> My preaching matured here. The congregation also had three, significant local missions that needed serious re-organization. We did that work together. Old First had an amazing Organist. We were stylistically quite different. We enjoyed each other though, and focused on our working relationship. This was invaluable; through him, I learned how to work with Church musicians.
<i>1994 - 2000</i>	<i>Adelphi Presbyterian Church, Adelphi, Maryland. Position: Pastor</i> This congregation should make a business out of training first time pastors. This was an ideal first call. I enjoyed it and so did they.
<i>1992 - 1993</i>	<i>Summit Presbyterian Church, Stafford, VA. Position: Full - Time Intern</i> I loved working with the young people of this Church and learned a great deal about how to lead a congregation.

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## SECULAR WORK EXPERIENCE

<i>1986 - 1989</i>	<i>United States Banknote Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Position: Hand Engraver</i>
<i>1984 - 1986</i>	<i>Self - employed Stationery Engraver, New York City.</i>
<i>1981 - 1984</i>	<i>Tiffany &amp; Company, New York, New York. Position: First a Watchmaker, then a Stationery Engraver</i>
<i>1977 - 1981</i>	<i>Self - employed Watchmaker, Boston, Massachusetts.</i>

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## OTHER SERVICE TO THE CHURCH

<i>2010 - 2014</i>	<i>Presbytery of the Redwoods: Committee on Preparation for Ministry</i>
<i>2001 - 2007</i>	<i>San Francisco Presbytery: Personnel Committee, Chair</i>
<i>1999 - 2000</i>	<i>National Capital Presbytery: Mission Committee</i>
<i>1995 - 1998</i>	<i>National Capital Presbytery: Nominating Committee</i>
<i>1994 - 1998</i>	<i>Peniel, A Center for Prayer and Renewal: Chairperson of the Director Search Committee, Member of Prayer Council, (Peniel's Board of Directors), and active on the Minister's Conference Committee.</i>
<i>1991</i>	<i>Saint Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D. C. Clinical Pastoral Education, One Unit.</i>
<i>1988 - 1989</i>	<i>Third Scots and Mariners Presbyterian Church (Old Pine), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Deacon before entering Seminary.</i>
<i>1983 - 1985</i>	<i>Helpline, New York, New York: Suicide Crisis Counselor.</i>

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## E D U C A T I O N

<i>2018</i>	<i>University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont. (Online Program) Certificate in Cannabis Science</i>
<i>1990 - 1994</i>	<i>Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. M.Div., 1994.</i>
<i>1989 - 1990</i>	<i>Eastern College, St. Davids, Pennsylvania. (Applied towards the senior year of my Sarah Lawrence College B.A.)</i>
<i>1983</i>	<i>Bowman Engraving School, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.</i>
<i>1977 - 1978</i>	<i>Bulova School of Watchmaking, Woodside, New York.</i>
<i>1989; 1974 - 1977</i>	<i>Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York. B.A., Writing, 1990.</i>

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## C O N T I N U I N G   E D U C A T I O N

<i>2015</i>	<i>Shalom Mountain Wisdom School</i>
<i>2013 - 2014</i>	<i>Certification program in the Unique Self Coaching Process</i>
<i>2012</i>	<i>Your Unique Self, an 8 week intensive online class.</i>
<i>2010</i>	<i>Integral Spiritual Experience II</i>
<i>2009</i>	<i>Integral Spiritual Experience I</i>
<i>2005</i>	<i>Interim Ministry Training, Unit II, Union Theological Seminary, (Now Union Presbyterian Seminary)</i>
<i>2006</i>	<i>Festival of Homiletics, Atlanta, Georgia.</i>
<i>2001</i>	<i>Interim Ministry Training, Unit I, Synod of the Northwest</i>
<i>2000 - 2001</i>	<i>Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ. Enrolled as a non-degree student for one year. The classes taken included: Independent work in the History of Preaching, Towards a Theology of Grace, Theology and Evolution: The Challenge of Darwinism, Apologetics, Electronic Media and Pastoral Issue, The Gospel of Luke, The Theology of John Calvin in Historical Context, and Preaching and Personality Type.</i>
<i>2000</i>	<i>Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, VA. Enrolled as a non-degree student for one class: Rembrandt and the Bible.</i>
<i>1988 - 2000</i>	<i>Peniel Minister's Conference, Lake Luzerne, NY. I attended and participated in this annual conference for pastors and their families, including the presentation of papers on occasion.</i>
<i>1994 - 2000</i>	<i>Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ and Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, VA. Each year I attended three or four continuing education seminars, including, Small Group Formation, A day with Ellen Charry, Writing and the Christian Faith, an annual event that George Hunsinger leads comparing two sermons from major, and very different, theologians, Preaching Conference, The Search for Meaning in a Post-Modern World, The Artist's Way, among others.</i>

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## NARRATIVE ESSAYS – AUGUST 21, 2015

(Limited to 1500 characters in length by the PC(USA) Personal Information Form)

**1. Describe a moment in your recent ministry that you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.**

Without a doubt, building and then working with, an incredible staff, beginning with my Associate, Jan Reynolds. When the congregation's capital campaign raised \$600K+, 10% went to a significant mission project. Jan drew small groups together to build consensus on direction, then guided us to an afterschool program that raised the participant's school work up an entire letter grade. She and I together started 2 different monthly services drawing an average 35 new people into the church. Jan would say my guidance was invaluable and OK, it helped, but I say it was her incredible competence and commitment. All I did was take things off her plate so she wasn't overwhelmed, and encourage her, (something I do very well). The Administrator, Laura, not only ran the most efficient church office I've seen, but developed manuals for when she inevitably left, built up the building rentals by 300%, and launched our web marketing, all in 3 years that included a maternity leave. We had two of the most spiritually sensitive pianists I've worked with. They, along with a Choir Director who somehow managed to get the choir to sing more on pitch, (please don't tell them I said that), made planning and leading worship an inspiring adventure. Cap that off with a custodian who went out of his way to make sure things were in place for any program we threw at him, and we had a rocking team. Working with them was the single biggest honor of my 20 years in ministry. (By all means tell them I said that.)

**2. Describe the ministry setting to which you believe God is calling you.**

Because it emphasizes my gifts and downplays my vulnerabilities I believe God is calling me to serve as an Interim pastor for a congregation, one that is looking for preaching that stimulates thinking, heart, and conversation. I've always felt that call, but now I feel a particular call to offer encouragement. I was so focused on change in my last call I lost track of that, but during this time of discernment, friends have consistently pointed to my gift for encouragement that I love to use.

With 20 years experience in a variety of congregations I'm confident I can lead a congregation as they work out their staff, program and leadership needs, seeking God's "next" for their life together. What kind of congregation? On that I'm open.

I've been described as "liberal," even "very liberal," but that's not entirely accurate. I hope to engage in conversations that form the theological mind and heart, accepting people right where they are. You can't help people build their capacity to draw on the power and love of God if you're always telling them they're wrong. I ask more questions than I make theological pronouncements, but I do make this one with some regularity. "Whatever burden weighs you down, whatever flaw, whatever dream left unfulfilled, know this: you carry the creative presence of God with you into the world today and with it the reality of a new humanity, one rising and breaking free of what binds us." I believe I'm called to a congregation who would like to hear that.

**3. What areas of growth have you identified in yourself?**

Ask around and you'll find that my nearly eight years of ministry in San Rafael did not end well. That's because staying too long, working to make the kind of radical changes that might redevelop a mainline congregation, I became increasingly frustrated. Ultimately the congregation didn't want those changes, surely their right, so in the last 2+ years I began to wonder if my life's work would really amount to much - it's so easy to get attached to outcomes. It's not their "fault;" the leadership was acting responsibly, doing what the congregation wanted, but I took their resistance personally. My rising frustration made the call untenable. If I'd left two years earlier we'd all have good memories. We enjoyed a successful capital campaign, saw significant growth in worship attendance early on, did substantive mission work and, the heart of my call, my preaching, was enthusiastically received to the very last. (It's probably why they put up with me as long as they did.) So how do I address this? I still believe I have significant gifts to offer a congregation, especially but not only, in the pulpit. First, I do daily work dismantling that false sense of self where I got, (and sometimes still get), my worth. That work enables me to draw from and express Christ's love which is animating creation. Second, I am seeking a call in Interim ministry precisely because it deemphasizes my particular vulnerabilities. Those come later; the first 4 years at FPCSR went exceedingly well.

**4. Describe a time when you have led change.**

I believe preaching is part of a conversation, the same conversation that formed the Bible so many years ago and continues in the life of the Church today. Sermons are the "next word" in that conversation; I expect a word back. At FPCSR, we did indeed have short but good conversations following my sermon during both our services. It wasn't always so. Early on I introduced the idea to the Session and got their support for a 2 or 3 week trial. The early service loved the conversations while many in the later service did not so we continued them at the early service but discontinued the practice at the later one. Over the years some in the later service would hear how well the conversations were going and wanted to try it again. We discussed it in a town hall meeting and again with Session's concurrence,



decided to try it from time to time. Many people became enthusiastic about the practice. Slowly, over a year or so, we worked it into the service every week. Of course some did not like it. Whenever I heard of someone who did not, I would seek them out, really just to listen and express my care for them. Those conversations mattered. Being cared for when you're on the "losing" side makes a difference in a congregation. Sometimes a further explanation helped a person to understand and smoothed the way, but other times we had to agree to disagree. I wish it were otherwise but that is the nature of change in a congregation. It's why we need to be careful when we make changes.

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## REFERENCES

***Rev. Jana Childers, Ph.D.***

53 Seminary Rd. San Anselmo, CA 94960, (415) 485-1583 (H), (415) 451-2859 (W).  
[jchilders@sfts.edu](mailto:jchilders@sfts.edu). Jana is Professor of Homiletics and Dean of San Francisco Theological Seminary. She has been a good friend for many years and is now my supervisor in teaching Homiletics. By way of full disclosure I'm happy to say that she is also my sister-in-law.

***Rev. Janice K. Reynolds***

1510 Fifth Ave., San Rafael, CA 94901, (415) 786-6910 (Cell).  
[janicekreynolds@yahoo.com](mailto:janicekreynolds@yahoo.com) Jan, as I've described in the narrative essays, was my Associate at First Presbyterian Church of San Rafael. She remained at FPCSR after I left and recently retired. She knows about all there is to know about me as a pastor.

***Rev. Daniel Christian***

85 Hollyleaf Way, Novato, CA 94949, (415) 209-3462 (Cell). [dachristian@mac.com](mailto:dachristian@mac.com) Dan is a colleague. I've been a pastor to him during the 10 years his wife was sick with and finally died from Cancer. (I share this information not only with his permission, but at his suggestion.) He can speak to my presence and ability in difficult pastoral situations over an extended period.

***Elder Lorna Wuertz***

16 Bahama Reef, Novato, CA 94949, (415) 601-8603 (Cell), (415) 382-8603 (Home).  
[lornawuertz@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lornawuertz@sbcglobal.net) Lorna was Chair of the PNC that called me to FPCSR and was Clerk for 4 of the 8 years I was there.

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## STATEMENT OF FAITH

Rev. Samuel G. Alexander

August 10, 2015

From the moment Mary Magdalene ran from the tomb saying, "I have seen the Lord," the Church has been debating what that witness means. Along the way ecumenical councils were called to conscribe the boundaries within which discussion about this mystery should take place. Their work is described in the Nicene Creed. I believe they got it right, and because I believe that, I am committed not only to loving those who believe they got it wrong, but also to joining with those who, whether through a Christian exposition of faith or not, think they got it right. The Doctrine of the Trinity and of the Two Natures of Christ are at the Creed's heart. They tell a story that proclaims both the character and the work of God. That story, dynamic in character, is drawn from the Bible, the Word of God, transculturated, alive and authoritative in my life today. It is through the texts of the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures that I come to know the nature of God and God's relationship to creation. On this foundation I seek to place my trust and build my life.

I believe in God who is traditionally called the Father, the great I AM, the first person face of God known in unity, known in the One that is by nature love. I believe in God who is traditionally called Christ, the Son, "Thou," the second person face of God who reaches out with creative passion, who meets us with arms yearning to hold our love. I believe in God who is traditionally called the Holy Spirit, the third person face of God, interpenetrating creation, animating its evolutionary story from the Big Bang to Shakespeare and beyond, each step an expression of love. I work to relate to God through all these faces, one leading me to another, each one deepening my engagement with the grace of God who gives life.

I believe Christ is fully God and fully human, interpenetrated by the Divine through all God's faces thus becoming a unique expression of God's abiding love just as, through the ebb and flow of God's grace in cross and resurrection we are brought into union with Christ, we each become a unique expression of God's love. With that grace, comes a unique obligation, for the world is in outrageous pain, pain

derived from the fact we have not yet become who we are - a unique expression of God's love. The only response to outrageous pain is outrageous love, the love offered through us in Christ.

I believe the Spirit is active forming the Church, a community of those trusting in God's grace expressed in Christ, which celebrates exquisite moments of Divine interpenetration in Baptism and Holy Communion, and who through Word and deed, proclaim the good news of Christ's resurrection. I believe in the resurrection though I do not pretend to know what it is, except to say it is God's next for our life. For God's nature is to love us into the next, novel moment. When Mary fled the tomb she had no idea what lay in store. We like her can open our hearts give our lives to the future of love, for we worship a God who loves us into the next glorious moment.



Should you want more information about what I believe or how I preach, I would point you to either my YouTube channel, Grace Comes First, or my book, *Evolving Christianity; Life After Faith Crisis*. A free chapter is available on my website [www.gracecomesfirst.net](http://www.gracecomesfirst.net)