

May 18, 2017

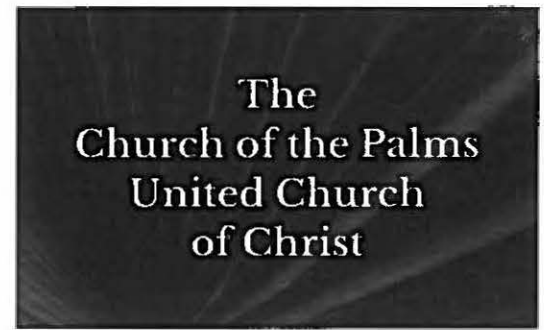
To: COCAM A

From: Rev. Paul A. Whitlock

Re: Jim Alexander

Dear Friends,

Jim Alexander is called by God to be a clergy person ministering with and for the people of God in the UCC. Jim is called by God; he meets the Marks of Ministry.



14808 N. Boswell Blvd., Sun City, AZ 85351

An Open and Affirming Congregation

I sat in your position for five years as I chaired the Commission on Ministry in the 1990s for the Florida Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I understand the magnitude of your decision. Twenty-six years ago, I would have been voting, "no", simply on Jim's lack of a seminary degree. Times are different now. Church has changed. I have evolved. I now understand that there are many paths to serving God. Thirty years of ministry counts for something! Jim is, in word and deed, a pastor as much as anyone I have ever met. Jim is called by God; he meets the Marks of Ministry.

In his professional preparation for worship, he excels. His artistry in the design of worship encompasses a wide variety of worshippers. He is an architect in worship - whether it be prayer, song, litany, art and visual elements, sermon, communion, or funeral. His results are consistently excellent and prophetic. Jim is called by God; he meets the Marks of Ministry.

He represents the UCC well. Jim and I have met and will continue to meet with Rev. Brady Abel for lectionary preparation and collegial support. Jim is registered and attending The General Synod in Baltimore this year. He will be going to the clergy retreat. Jim is called by God; he meets the Marks of Ministry.

And I rejoice that my family - wife, parents, children, and uncle have a pastor in Jim. Over half of my ministry has occurred within churches with multiple staffs. That didn't necessarily mean my family had a pastor. But, Jim has been their pastor since day one (reference the recommendation letter by my wife and mother). Jim is a great teammate, colleague, and pastor. I will be glad to share more about Jim in person or telephone. Jim is called by God; he meets the Marks of Ministry.

Shalom,

Rev. Paul A. Whitlock

Senior Pastor

The Church of the Palms, UCC

THE REV. LEN SILVESTER (RET.)
9600 N. 96TH STREET – UNIT 210
SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85258-5163
480.621.6430

May 15, 2017

C.O.C.A.M. "A"

Southwest Conference, United Church of Christ

Dear Friends,

It gives me pleasure to recommend James Alexander for ordained ministerial standing in the UCC. When we welcomed him onto the staff of the Church of the Palms in 2014, it was our honor to begin with him the journey toward authorized ministry in the UCC. Working with him and learning from him were among the highlights of my year prior to retirement.

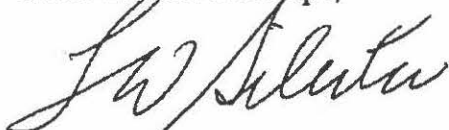
His gifts for and call to ordained ministry are immediately evident to anyone with whom he has served. Jim turned around a struggling music program in a matter of weeks, and the turn-around had as much to do with his pastoral ability as his superb musical talents. (So excellent is he as a vocalist and director that it is too easy to pigeonhole him there.)

My initial intuition was confirmed as I watched his ministry reach beyond music and change lives. A man of deep personal faith, his commitment to Christ shines in what he says and does. At the same time, he is not rigid or overbearing.

He works well with folks across a spectrum of beliefs, interests, and abilities. He strives for excellence in all things, and does so with an infectious spirit that inspires and uplifts. He is effective at recruiting, motivating, training, and encouraging working teams. He takes good care of the people he shepherds – tending to their spirits as much as their production. Jim is ultra-reliable, emotionally secure, spiritually mature, and exhibits the finest in ministry ethics and boundaries.

Coming from a very different background, "UCC-world" represented a challenge to him organizationally and theologically. Undaunted, he embraces a Spirit-led faith that continues to deepen; he has a clear, well-articulated commitment to peace, justice, and full inclusion for all in the church's life. He has open eyes to the new forms of faith community emerging in these times. He has my full support.

Yours in faith and hope,



Leonard W. Silvester



Shepherd of the Hills

United Church of Christ • 5524 E. Lafayette Blvd. • Phoenix, Arizona 85018-4599 • (602) 840-3130

April 17, 2017

Committee on Church and Ministry (A)
Southwest Conference UCC
917 E. Sheridan St.
Phoenix, AZ 85006

Re: Consideration of James Alexander for Ordination

Dear COCAM,

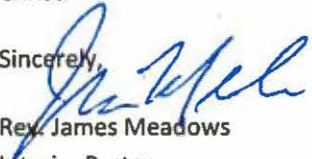
I had the good fortune of getting to know James Alexander while I serve as Interim Sr. Pastor of Church of the Palms in Sun City, Arizona, from January 2015 through May 2016. Jim was our Music Director and Pastoral Assistant during a crucial time at COTP, due to the health issues of our Ministries Coordinator and Associate Pastor. Our Ministries Coordinator left the office in May of 2015 with health problems, and our Associate Pastor (the Rev. Judy Green-Davis) suffered complications from heart surgery and was unable to work beyond mid-December of that same year. Jim's service to Palms was invaluable during those months when he and I (along with our Office Coordinator) had to cover the duties of those two staff persons.

Working with Jim, I was able to observe and experience his faith and passion for ministry, not only through his skills in music, but in his love and care for many others in the congregation. Jim made hospital visits, and was especially pastoral to members of the choir and their families. He preached and served in various capacities in worship services, and took an active part in worship-planning. He and his partner, Jeff, led numerous excursions with church members through the Worship and Fine Arts committee.

During my tenure at Church of the Palms, Jim and I often discussed his discernment process for (at that time) Commissioned Ministry. He expressed a genuine calling to take his ministry beyond music and into pastoral care, and I could see his skills and faith that would lead to success as a pastor.

It is with pleasure, then, that I recommend James Alexander be considered for ordination in the United Church of Christ.

Sincerely,


Rex James Meadows
Interim Pastor
Shepherd of the Hills UCC
Phoenix, Arizona

To: Members of the COCAM A Committee
of the United Church of Christ,
Southwest Conference

Greetings,

We, the members of the Church of the Palms, *Members In Discernment* committee for Jim Alexander, having examined his background, accompanied him on his journey through the MID process, and having experienced his ministry, find that he is well qualified for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

As to the *Marks of Ministry* specified by the UCC-- we understand that Jim hasn't followed the traditional MDIV / Ordination path. However, we find that his Southern Baptist ordination and 30 years of ministry, as well as his theological growth and ministry here affirm his readiness, gifts, passion and call to ministry in the United Church of Christ at the Church of the Palms.

Areas of special gifts, achievement and excellence include:

He's a professional. Jim listens to all perspectives, is open to dissenting views and doesn't become defensive. This is evidenced, for example, by the diversity of his MID committee!

He is collegial with staff and keeps confidences. Jim is insightful, has vision, and is respectful of each person on staff and in the congregation.

He believes in Jesus the Christ, but supports others who understand or experience God differently. Watching Jim grow theologically is like observing a butterfly emerging from its cocoon.

As a man of deep faith, Jim's dedication and relentless energy in maturing and perfecting his ministry skills are unparalleled.

Jim embodies the core values of the United Church of Christ in everything he does.

The Holy Spirit flows through his words and heart, as evidenced by his preaching, prayerfulness and presence.

He's a classically trained, educated, gifted and inspired musician who draws music from our choir beyond any reasonable expectation. He's more than a choir director, **he's the pastor to the choir and their families.**

He is **adept at the pastoral skills of listening and caring** as he ministers to this congregation.

God's love flows through Jim's words and his presence in times of grief and joy.

Areas of growing edges and continuing progress include:

We encourage **Jim to continue exploring the theological diversity of the UCC.**

We, as a committee, commit ourselves to continue to challenge and support Jim in his faith journey and growth as an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ at the Church of the Palms.

Church of the Palms commits to facilitate paid time for Jim to meet and interact collegially with other pastors.

In summation, it is clear to us that Jim Alexander's call to ministry in the United Church of Christ is God directed. He has met the *Marks of Ministry* as outlined by the UCC, Southwestern Conference. We enthusiastically recommend full recognition of his previous Southern Baptist ordination and approval of his call of ordained ministry at The Church of the Palms, United Church of Christ.

Yours in Christ,

5/01/2017

My name is Jeff Scruggs. I have been Jim Alexander's partner for over 21 years. I know that I should construct this document from a non-personal point of view. However, in the ministry that I have personally received from Jim and the ministry that I have witnessed him provide to others, there is not a distinct separation.

Having complete knowledge of Jim's religious foundation, I have witnessed how, when he came to terms with being gay, he was able to identify the difference between the love of Christ and the opinion of people. This was a struggle for him, and I am thankful that I was in his life at this time and was able to offer what support I could. It was in this time, that I too found the true Christ, and because of Jim began attending church for the first time in my life.

I was immediately keenly aware of Jim's ability to relate to people. Even though this should not be about his musical talents, part of what Jim is all about is sharing God through the music. It is, quite frankly, impossible to think of Jim Alexander and not recognize his musical abilities.

Many of his relationships with people in the church developed out of a fondness for music. The choir is constantly inspired by his professional leadership and the end result. People are brought out of their shell and singing solo when they never thought that they could. To me, this translates into effecting a person's life beyond the doors of the church. That is ministry. Because of the compassion that he shared every week, Jim was easily the one to go to for counseling or encouragement. He has been there for families as they say goodbye to a loved one as well as when families welcome a new member at a wedding or a birth. Jim retained these positive attributes from his years when he thought that he was, "wrong," in God's eyes. Jim served as a minister to my family when my father passed and even performed the funeral. This in and of itself is an accomplishment. Most of my family is non-Christian and many are homophobic. Jim, however, was still asked to perform this most significant service for our family.

In 2009, I was placed on a transplant list for a kidney and a pancreas. The years leading up to this were extremely trying for Jim and our families. I was near death many times. Jim was there for my family with words of encouragement and support. This was his partner dying, and yet, he had it within him to comfort others who were in need. I was blessed with the double transplant in 2010, and Jim continues to support me as I continue to deal with the challenges along the way.

I know Jim to be an excellent leader both in the sanctuary and in an office environment. For decades he has assisted in developing worship services from the order of worship to matching hymns and anthems to the day's message. He constantly strives to enhance the worship experience. Jim has been involved in creating many unforgettable Sundays because of his knowledge of the big picture. He is professional and a perfectionist at the same time.

Since we have been at a UCC church. I have witnessed other aspects of Jim's ministry that I had not seen before. For the first time since I have known him, he has been allowed to deliver the message. Even though we live together, I am never aware of what he will talk about or how it will be delivered. I have been delighted and moved each time he is at the pulpit. His style is endearing. His addition of comedy is very well received. We have heard him quote in character scenes from Willy Wonka and pass out donuts while eating one himself. He then has the ability to tie it all together and make it relative to the day's scripture.

Although I appreciate those that have gone through seminary to become ordained, I do feel that it is not the only way. Our daughter, Brittani, as a matter of fact, is being sponsored by Church of the Palms and will graduate this summer. This works for her and is how she wanted to pursue this as a career. Jim, however, has been lead by the spirit and has always walked that path. When his high achieving book learned daughter calls dad for clarification or just a shoulder during difficult times of studies, I am proud. Dad just may have picked up a few things along this long journey. I pray that this journey will be validated by your vote of approval.

Sincerely,
Jeff Scruggs
Church of the Palms

To Whom it May Concern:

To tell anyone the many ways that Jim Alexander has ministered to me is not an easy thing because there are so many. So, I will speak to a most difficult single time - that of ending the 30-year marriage to Jim's father. In preparing for doing this, I set a plan for myself, which I deliberately kept silent about with my entire family. When everything was in place, and I shared my intentions with them, they were all shocked. My daughter was hurt and angry. Jim expressed concern that he had not seen it coming. That was the beginning of a different kind of relationship between the two of us.

During and after the divorce, I particularly needed understanding and consolation from family and friends. It was soon quite clear that I was an outcast - in my family circle, my church, and in most of the community. The one person who never wavered was Jim. He talked with me, cried with me, and prayed for me. He made contact with pastors in the town where I had moved, asking them to visit and reach out to me.

His love and his understanding of my reasons for the divorce, saw me through one of the most difficult times in my life. At the same time, it revealed to me the ability he had for demonstrating the love of Christ - without hesitation and without question.

Jim has himself suffered from the painful judgment of people around him, but he has continued always to "let them see Christ in him." I try to emulate that in my own life, but often fall short. He helps me to try again.

Jane Zupowski
4/30/17

Steven Dale Zukowski
26907 North 176 Drive
Surprise, AZ 85387
(623) 584-8225

To whom it may concern:

I have known Jim Alexander since the fall of 1988. In the years since that time, I have seen him go through a series of personal challenges, and I have witnessed his steadfast faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ. The life he has lived, and the kindness with which he has dealt with everyone around him, has been of particular encouragement to me.

When he first graduated from Grand Canyon University, I saw a young, enthusiastic man who had been blessed with a phenomenal talent. He entered the music ministry and was instrumental in taking the choir of various churches to the next level, and left every church in an improved state. He was making quite a name for himself in the Phoenix area. Still, I couldn't help but think that he was "offering his wonderful talent to God." This was certainly praiseworthy, but "in our brokenness He is strong."

When he experienced his hardships, as we all have had to do, I saw the transition: He was finally broken, and what emerged was the beautiful soul of a humble servant. He no longer relied on his great talent; he no longer offered his "gift" to God. He offered his total life, and in the humbleness of this broken servant, God was able to bless me, and I'm sure, everyone else who has ever heard him preach the gospel, lead a choir, or sing a solo.

Watching Jim through these years has been the most consistent Christian testimony I have had. God will continue to use him as he makes himself available to Him, and I am honored to recommend him for any position you may have. Jim just wants to be of service to our Lord. The harvest is so great...

Jim Alexander: Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministers in UCC

I, Nancy, first knew Jim Alexander when he was the church organist at a small Presbyterian Church we attended. At that time we were both in eighth grade. For the past thirty plus years I've observed Jim's sense of call grow and develop into adulthood through his involvement in church life. In fact, I credit Jim as a catalyst of my own faith journey and sense of call into ministry. His passion for the church, his ministry through music, and his love for God influenced me even as a young teen. Still today, his life continues to be a witness to me through his devotion to Christ, his sensitivity to the Spirit, his love for God, and his commitment to ministry. As many can testify, ministry is not always a bed of roses and the thorns can be quite painful, so one wonders why Jim would persist as he has. Only a deep and abiding sense of God's call can explain Jim's persistence in ministry. His faith journey has taken him into many denominational scenarios and carried him through some difficult struggles, which has only served to solidify his calling and strengthen his faith.

I, David, have known Jim since 1984 when he first served on my staff as minister of music. Though he has experienced many life changes, through them all he has consistently exhibited a strong sense of call to the ministry. Jim's testimony and persistent involvement in ministry demonstrates that he understands the difference between a deep spiritual call from God as apposed to simply a vocational choice. It is this spiritual call to which Jim has committed his life.

We have always considered Jim to be very innovative when it comes to ministry. We believe his creativity is one of the qualities that empower the individuals he engages with, which impacts the church body as a whole. We consider this creativity to be the work of the Spirit in Jim's life. In the churches we've had the privilege of serving in with Jim, this creative leadership has helped to facilitate growth and spark new commitments in the life of the church. When he has been allowed to utilize this gift, the church has reaped the benefits.

Another benefit is that Jim is very organized and detailed when it comes to how he approaches and executes any idea or task. This is most helpful when having to deal with deadlines, organizing large groups of people or planning events. This quality has been most beneficial in other lines of work he has done or is currently doing, which we've recently been a part of. He is good at delegating when necessary and giving attention to details. These leadership skills have benefited him in all of his professions and endeavors.

In the political climate we live in and the amazing diversity that is our humanity, we've seen how Jim connects with all people with compassion, gentleness and sensitivity. Over the years we've seen Jim progress in his compassion for the needs and circumstances of others and how he responds to others. His sympathy towards the struggles and concerns of others is quite genuine. We think this growth is just another indication of his ongoing transformation into the image of Christ.

Through various conversations that we have had with Jim, we know that there are many issues that concern him and that he is passionate about. Having a heart for justice and mercy is

one of the reasons that he desires to be a part of UCC. Recently he expressed that in the climate of injustice that we are facing these days, we can't just sit back but need to have a voice and take a stand. We've also discussed how he deals with others that have different beliefs or views. We appreciate that he can listen and engage in conversation, but does not push his beliefs or agenda on others, even if they are trying to push their beliefs on him. Again, this is the sensitivity we were talking about earlier. Even with other church members with whom he may not agree, his main objective is to minister to them where they are, and be what they need. His willingness to engage with others allows him to enter into a relationship, which then can build mutual respect and trust. His love for people and his sincerity make him a comfortable person to be around. The gift of hospitality does not come easy to everyone, but seems to be quite natural for Jim.

Just as we are all on journey and are being conformed to the image of Christ, this has been evident over the many years we've known Jim. He has matured in his understanding of who God is, who God has made him to be, and how to be Christ's presence in this world. This growth has definitely shaped his character, which has ultimately changed how he lives in relationship to others, as well as his work ethic. He has always had a very strong sense of commitment to the church and to his personal relationships.

Jim has also shown a desire to continue his theological development through independent study. He has sought out advise on appropriate reading that will help him with that task, and is open to regular theological dialogue with other clergy. We do think Jim would benefit from a spiritual director who could help him continue to develop a more formal plan of spiritual formation.

Jim has a deep commitment to the scriptures and diligently uses scripture as the foundation for his preaching and for the selection of liturgy and music when preparing worship. He also demonstrates a genuine commitment to prayer and applies that commitment to everyday life situations. This commitment has only strengthened and grown in the time that we have known him, as well as his passion to serve in the church and be a Pastor to the people.

We have great respect for Jim and who he has become as a Christian, as a minister, as a musician, as a father, and as a friend. We are thrilled to be on journey with him as he follows this path towards ordination.

Sincerely:

Rev. Nancy Gunn, Minister of Worship, Church at Cactus

Rev. David Gunn, Pastor, Church at Cactus

Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers In the United Church of Christ

Having known Jim Alexander for upward of 13 years, I have been privileged to receive and watch his Ministry in both general and specific Ways. He is a man who loves and obeys his God, and shares the love and teachings of Jesus Christ. He readily uses Christ's examples of love, discipline, commitment, and humility in gatherings, and friendship. I was blessed to be witness to his work at Epworth United Methodist Church in his music ministry, as he shared the messages of his faith through litany, prayers, and song.

But more than that were the specific times he showed his love of God's world, and his compassion for the people in it, when he created the service for my dearest friends' son, a very young man who had taken his own life. Jim's loving help and ministry in creating the celebration of Seth's life, and giving comfort to the devastated family and friends who loved Seth, was nothing less than extraordinary. He assuaged despair, and instilled hope, and reminded us all of the way God loves ALL His Children.

During a rough time in our particular Church, when leadership and followers were at odds, he persuaded love and self-discipline, rather than anger and reactive complaint. When they began to be unable to lead effectively, and fell into their own funk and despair, Jim stepped in and assuaged anger and rebellion among the parishioners, not with admonishment, but rather with reminders of how we were to conduct ourselves in Christ's name.

This past year, my own son, Ben, was diagnosed with a fatal tumor. He suffered a year and a few months of slow deterioration of body, and mind. Through it all, Jim was supportive and continues to be so as we prepare the celebration of Ben's life. He has continued to nurture and coax us moving forward through our grief, anger, and pain, by being a reminding example of the way we are to proceed through hardships.

In addition to this is Jim's extraordinary gift of music, and it's aid in helping each of us remember who we are to be in God's forces to strive in love, and determination. His reference to scriptures and music that is

inspiring, soothing, and fortifying in the ways of striving to be the best ministers of Jesus, regardless of, or because of the importance of pressing on, as Paul said.

Jim's total presence in the use of the sacraments and elements, as well as the witness to the message involved in the Eucharist, are uplifting and humbling as he speaks and exemplifies them.

I have also witnessed his treatment of children and even animals as representing the importance of "Blessing the Beasts and the Children", and can think of no one better to be in formal ministry and leadership, as a shining (and also witty) teacher/preacher in God's ministry to His children!

He is a leader, a teacher, a helpmate, a preacher and a friend.

Dawn Bell

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dawn Bell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the printed name.

From: <garnetith@gmail.com>
Date: Sat, May 6, 2017 at 8:10 PM
Subject: RE: Jim Alexander
To: Paul Whitlock <pastorpaul1911@gmail.com>

I would like to thank you for letting me tell you about our friend Jim Alexander.

We first met Jim when we moved to Phoenix in 2003. He was the Minister of Music at Epworth Methodist Church. We felt welcomed by his wonderful smile and caring. He invited both Gary and I sing in the choir under his direction. It was a wonderful fellowship and blessed time for us helping us to get to know the wonderful people in that congregation.

When our son, Seth died on May 21st of 2010, Jim was there for us with comforting words and friendship even though he and Jeff were having their own trouble with Jeff's health. We asked Jim to do a memorial service for Seth as he had known him while we attended Epworth. He was very organized and helpful with suggestions and our wishes and needs at this time. We felt his true caring for our feelings of loss and need for a steadfast Christian presence which he provided. There was never any judgment only comforting words and caring actions.

I have always thought of Jim as a wonderful human being, caring to the congregation he was serving and his friends. He has shown himself to us to have great integrity and selflessness in all things.

I count us very lucky and blessed to count Jim Alexander as a wonderful friend.

April 25, 2017

To whom This May Concern:

I have known Jim Alexander for over 15 years and have worked and worshiped with him regularly over that time. My first experience with Jim was as the Director of Music at Epworth United Methodist Church (UMC). I had just turned 50 at that time and had been singing in choirs since my elementary school days. Jim was the first Director I had ever worked with who prayed with and for us as a choir and as individuals and whose guiding philosophy is that we, as a choir, are not just singers - we are Worship Leaders! The choir is not just there to lead the congregation in singing but to enhance and enliven their worship experience. He encouraged us to not just know the notes and the words of the hymns/songs but to feel and believe the message we are bringing and to impart that to the congregation in body, mind and spirit. I know that for myself and for many who have worked with him over the years in several churches and two denominations that he is committed to Building Transformational Leadership Skills.

In addition to working with Jim in various church choirs I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with him in a professional secular woman's vocal ensemble. I was relieved to find that he brings the same level of professionalism and spirituality to this group as he has to all of the church choirs that we have worked in. It is refreshing to know that Jim's commitments to quality performance and spirituality transcends "boundaries" and are deeply ingrained facets of his personality. I feel that this embodies both his Spiritual Foundation and Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal assets. He is a very gifted musician in his own right and he uses those gifts to assist others to strive for excellence and be the very best they can be and encourage us to stretch ourselves beyond what we feel we are capable of to see what God can really do with us!

Over the course of the last 15 years we have walked through many life experiences together. We have both struggled with and conquered weight and health issues and been a source of encouragement and support through those journeys. We have also been there for a variety of family issues: 1) my youngest son's incarceration and, when he returned home, Jim was one of the first to offer him work and help him to reestablish himself as a contributing member of society, 2) the resulting 12 years of separation from our grandchildren and the ultimate reunion with our oldest granddaughter (he continues to pray with us for the full restoration of our family with the return of our grandson), 3) multiple surgeries for BOTH my husband and myself, some with long and complicated recoveries, 4) the loss of his father, both of my

parents and the near loss of his partner Jeff and the resulting transplant that saved his life, 5) the discrimination and alienation from church "families" - for a variety of reasons, 6) support, encouragement and funding for me to go on not 1 but 2 mission trips - to Peru and Zimbabwe - and the spiritual growth I received from them, and 7) ultimately finding a denomination that we all feel truly is the "church" God wants us all to be! Basically, we have been there for the good, the bad and the ugly in each other, our families, our churches and the world at large. Throughout all of these times, challenges and experiences Jim has remained a source of spiritual strength, personal comfort and infinite wisdom. We have had numerous and lengthy discussions about faith, scriptures, personal, societal and spiritual issues and beliefs over the years. I can testify that I have felt more and better "pastoral" care from Jim Alexander than I have from most of the "official" pastors I have known. His faith is not a "Monday-Friday - 9-5" job - it is who and what Jim IS 24-7/365! So, he clearly lives Caring for all Creation and Working Together for Justice and Mercy!

I could go on for pages and days about the gifts and graces that I have witnessed in Jim over time but I think that I will close this by simply letting you know that, for me and my family, it is a blessing to finally see him have the opportunity to finally BE the pastor that we have felt God calling him to be all along. He more than meets all of the Marks of Ministry and will be an asset to the United Church of Christ and all who worship with him in any capacity.

Prayerfully Submitted,

Toni and Steven Berg
5602 N. 78th Drive
Glendale, AZ 85303
(H) 623-846-5427

From: **Malinda Case** <malindajcase13@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Apr 28, 2017 at 9:51 AM
Subject: Marks of Ministry

Please find attached my comments for Jim Alexander.
Mindy

Comments for Jim Alexander, based on my perspective, as related to "Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers in the UCC" from Malinda Case 4-28-17.

1) "Exhibiting A Spiritual Foundation & Ongoing Spiritual Practice"

Jim has been continuing discernment to his calling to ordained ministry, which includes being guided by the Holy Spirit & understanding the power of the Holy Spirit in his life, work, & call.

2) "Nurturing UCC Identity"

Jim holds active membership in The Palms UCC & is committed to the church being a united & uniting church as in John 17:2 - that all may be one through the power of the Holy Spirit.

3) "Building Transformational Leadership Skills"

Jim regularly witnesses to God's redeeming power in our choir setting, including prayers for us &/or by us. He is sensitive to our diverseness. Many of my experiences with Jim are choir related where necessary & appropriate administrative tasks required for effective results are performed efficiently (mostly behind the scenes), so that we're not confronted with 'surprises' reflecting lack of preparation that impede our shared goal of joyfully making a joyful noise.

4) "Engaging Sacred Stories & Traditions"

Jim's preaching reflects his study & understanding of Scripture with citations & application of relevant passages & verses in ways that bring life to & bring to our lives the sacred stories.

5) "Caring For All Creation"

Jim is intentional about his self care & life balance, as well as being sensitive to what defines wellness in/for others.

6) "Participating in Theological Praxis"

Jim demonstrates appreciation for & participation in the ecumenical & interfaith partnerships. He has been enthusiastic & instrumental in The Palms choir singing with other churches during Holy Week services where we're at another church or that we host - all of which usually requires more effort on his part than if The Palms choir did it alone. Jim has led Hymn Sings held at The Palms as part of summer

ecumenical sings. When The Palms hosts its Week of Prayer service that includes 8-10 churches, Jim helps see that the music enhances the service. He will lead part of a September multi-faith retreat in Prescott. Jim's use of his music-related gifts integrates theological reflection in teaching, preaching, & ecclesial community leadership, as well as demonstrates an appreciation for & participation in the ecumenical & interfaith partnerships of the UCC.

7) "Working Together For Justice & Mercy"

Jim's leadership of the Board of Worship & Fine Arts is an example of engaging in mission & outreach & building relationships of mutual trust & interdependence, in that he organizes &/or oversees organization of events / trips where church members & guests can come together. In so doing, new friendships are made that can enhance trust & interdependence within the body of Christ.

8) "Strengthening Inter- & Intra- Personal Assets"

Jim is a serious person, but he doesn't take himself so seriously that it gets in the way of what he's called to accomplish. Based on my experience, Jim has integrity, & he respects the dignity of others. As we aging congregants struggle (some more than others) to live a life worth living, Jim is respectful of the spectrum. Related to an aspect of communication, Jim works with the church's technology, sound, & visual options (or lack of) & has applied his expertise to facilitating or advising upgrades as time & money allow. I would expect that same operating procedure to be inherent in whatever he is called to take on.

April 20, 2017

Dear United Church of Christ, Southwest Conference

We are writing this letter on behalf of Jim Alexander, Director of Worship and Fine Arts at Church of the Palms in Sun City, Arizona. We have been active members of this church for the past nineteen years and have served on a variety of boards, including Church Council, Deacons, Stewards, Evangelism, Mission & Outreach, Life Long Learning, Ecumenical Team, Personnel, Budget, Pastor Search Committee and Pastoral Parish Relations Committee, Care & Concern Committee. As you can see we take the life of this church seriously and value greatly the spiritual leadership provided by our ministerial staff.

Having said this, we would like to speak to the qualities we see in Jim Alexander:

- **Leadership**

Jim has taken an active leadership role in several activities in our church. He has been instrumental in revitalizing the choir, the Board of Music and Fine Arts and the Care and Concern Committee. Because of his leadership, we have significantly improved our Sunday services by coordinating of the audio-visual equipment and training of the individuals running this equipment. He has organized and inspired members of the Care and Concern Committee by improving the data base and making information accurate and available when needed. He has reached out to lay leaders in the church to provide input to the monthly church newsletter and web page. Jim is a great listener and is always very genuine in his dealings with church members. He is honest and open in facing challenges and recognizing success. Through these leadership efforts our church has a renewed sense of purpose and mission.

- **Knowledge & Articulation of Biblical Concepts**

Jim has had an increasing opportunity to participate in Sunday services both as a service leader and preacher. He has excellent communication skills. His preaching is thoughtful, well researched and guided by solid biblical principles. He interjects humor when appropriate and gives wonderful life situation and personal stories to engage his listeners. He prays with compassion and conviction. We know folks in our church who do not attend service regularly but make a point to come when Jim is preaching. When we have communion and Jim is assisting, he brings a strong sense of sanctity to the activity. All of this suggests that Jim is outstanding in and around the pulpit.

- **Theological “Groundedness” and Ecumenical Orientation**
Social Justice and Ecumenism are increasingly important functions of our ministries. Jim has been very supportive of these immerging components of our church life. Jim speaks with confidence and credibility when discussing the importance of following the teachings of Jesus and not being distracted by man-made barriers that create walls of separation and sow seeds of disharmony rather than harmony. Jim preaches and practices love of God and love of all our brothers and sisters (all of God’s children). His is a courageous champion for the love that Jesus taught, and a living testimonial that those who some may reject have a place in God’s kingdom and an important role to play in the life of the church here on earth. Jim encourages all to reach out, be open, and do the mission work of the church. He is an individual who is trusted and respected by all who know him.

We hope these thoughts help in moving Jim forward in obtaining ordination within our beloved UCC church.

Sincerely,

Pat & John Durbin

Wendy Whitlock
25676 N. 108th Dr.
Peoria, AZ 85383

May 7, 2017

Southwest Conference
United Church of Christ
917 East Sheridan
Phoenix, AZ 85006

To Whom It May Concern:

Being family of clergy has its blessings and challenges. One of the biggest challenges is forfeiting your opportunity for having a pastor. What an answer to a prayer it was for my daughter and I to arrive at Church of the Palms when my husband became Senior Pastor and be blessed with Jim Alexander as our pastor. Jim presence in our lives has been invaluable. Moving is always a difficult process, but Jim was there to listen and provide pastoral care during our transition. His door was always open, and he was never too busy to stop and make sure our mental health was in check. Everyone asks, "How are you?", but hardly anyone sticks around to hear the answer; however, Jim does. As a clergy spouse, I know that Sunday morning is a seriously hectic time, but Jim does not let the chaos of getting ready for worship interfere with the essential ministry of shepherding congregants. Also, this was my daughter's first year of college and her first time to live away from home. Jim made sure she wasn't forgotten and sent notes and emails to remind her she was part of a church family. You would think that an eighteen-year-old girl would not find a home in a predominantly retired congregation. However, Jim led the way to make sure she had opportunities to serve and be connected spiritually to the Church of the Palms.

Not only have I been spiritually feed in private conversations, but I have grown in worship under Jim's leadership. He has preached inspiring messages that have caused me to reflect and stretch in my thinking on religious matters. Jim and I come from distinctly different schools of thought in Christian thinking. I can be rather stuck in my ways in regards to my beliefs, and I wasn't sure how much insight I would gain from his teaching. Shame on me, for on the contrary, Jim has an engaging, narrative style of preaching, and more than once, I have been deeply drawn into his message. From this, I have been willing to see more than one side of a story. At the Easter sunrise service, he took the familiar story of the Road to Emmaus and totally gave me new insights strengthening my faith and beliefs. Though our thoughts can be different, he has never made me feel like there isn't room at the table for my, or anyone else's, point of view. In our world that is becoming more and more divisive, it is refreshing and essential to have those in the pulpit who share from their soul, explain with their brain, and encourage with their heart so that all of us may find our unique path to the creator.

Besides the pulpit, Jim finds other unique ways to put his stamp on worship. Reaching into the modern world, Jim takes charge of the electronics in church. On the outside, this may not seem as

essential as other parts of ministry. However, if we are to maintain a relationship with those under 40, we have to strive to find ways to connect in less traditional means. One of my favorite parts of the service is the artistic slides that accompany the various parts of the service. Jim educational experience recognizes that many modalities are needed to reach many different learners. As a visual person, I find the color and vibrancy of the pictures he selects engaging and thought provoking. He also leads the Worship and Fine Arts Ministry that finds other ways to enliven the sanctuary with beauty. I find myself in conversation with people after worship not only about what we heard, but about what we saw. The artist in me is grateful for the connections to the spiritual realms found through the visual stimulus Jim presents to me during worship.

I have been genuinely blessed by Jim Alexander. As much as someone might want to bottle something wonderful up and keep it for themselves, it would be a sin for me not to encourage Jim to expand on his ministry. Should The Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ choose to ordain him, as I think you should, he can bless more than just me and this local congregation. We are fortunate to have him in our company and I know he will continue to grow and bring hope and renewal to those of us lucky enough to be part of his life.

Sincerely,

Wendy Whitlock

May 7, 2017

Committee on Church and Ministry A
Southwest Conference UCC
917 E. Sheridan Street
Phoenix, AZ 85006

Dear Friends,

I write this letter on behalf of Jim Alexander.

I live with my son and daughter-in-law, Paul and Wendy Whitlock. We attend The Church of the Palms. I was uncertain, at first, whether or not we could find the spiritual support my husband and I needed - the Senior Pastor is my son and will always be my son first and foremost.

What a joy to discover Jim Alexander at the church. He is more than a great musician, he is my pastor and my husband's pastor, too. He is a skilled public speaker, biblically based, with sound UCC theology – which was a “must” for us. He has the ability to make the scripture come alive in new and exciting ways. I have heard many preachers in my 85 years. Some have been good at preaching, while others, have not been. Jim is a good preacher because he engages the text and shares personal stories with which I can relate.

I think what I appreciate most about Jim is his pastoral care. He has a keen ability to listen with a tender heart. His prayers are sincere and powerful. He loves helping people. It is so good to have someone who cares. Jim is all that and more!

Jim's prayers, hymn choices, and liturgies connect with the scripture theme of the day. He embodies Godly humor, a compassionate heart, and joy energy. He is my pastor!

In Christ,

Mary Whitlock

April 28, 2017

To Whom This May Concern:

Re: Jim Alexander

Members and visitors of The Church of the Palms – Sun City, Arizona – have been asked to make a statement of faith regarding our “brother” Jim Alexander who serves the Lord as our Assistant Pastor and as Director of Worship and Fine Arts. We are, of course, also blessed to have him as our music director.

There are so many areas of our church life where Jim has made a huge impact. Our choir has increased immensely in number and has blossomed under his direction. He has a “connection” with the choir members and they all have an upmost respect for him and his musical expertise.

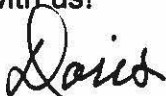
This same “connection” follows Jim into the sanctuary when he participates in the Sunday morning worship service.

He is a leader – a thoughtful and inspirational leader. He has a way of drawing in the congregation, which makes them a real part of the morning message. It is a feeling that each one of us has - a wonderful, inspirational feeling. I, for sure, know how ‘complete’ I feel each time Jim presents the sermon. Each heartfelt thought-provoking message he gives, stays with you throughout the following week. A great way to live each day!

Jim Alexander and Pastoral Care: My husband, Allan, served with the U.S. Army during the Viet Nam War. He was exposed to agent orange (daily) and has been diagnosed with Parkinson’s. (We recently celebrated fifty years of marriage). On March 16, 2017- I met with Jim at the church. I have been having a very difficult time dealing with the disease’ progression. Maybe, because of Jim and me both having a musical background, I have felt a “connection” to him. His kindness and mannerisms helped me to express my feelings. He is a very good listener and very compassionate. After our discussion, we prayed together for several minutes. This was/is very important to me. I have felt much better after our meeting. I know that he holds Allan and me in his prayers. I have felt so much more *at peace* ever since.

This has been only a brief testament to Jim’s work at our church. There is so much more.

He is definitely a “*Man of God*”. And we are very thankful and blessed to have him here with us!



Doris E. Gott

Member: The Church of the Palms – April 5, 1998

April 28, 2017

To Whom This May Concern:

Bringing Jim Alexander on board at The Church of the Palms was a much needed and wise decision. He is pleasant and soft-spoken, yet his demeanor allows him to retain a high level of respect.

Jim is very conscientious, dedicated and sincere when he is sharing his Christian message with the congregation. When Jim is speaking, he is very easy to hear and understand. He has a way of personalizing his message and making it easy for us to relate to and understand.

Jim's mannerisms and ways of engaging with his listening audience builds on a higher level of respect for him.

He is also a perfectionist in his position of providing beautiful Christian music (including his solos), etc. to our church services and other times of worship.

He has an ability (people/person skills) to get his choir and musicians to dig in and achieve higher levels of skill and perfection without upsetting or offending them. The choir and musicians, including the church pianist/organist give him 150% because of his calm way/ability. He is highly respected by all.

I am sure that whatever path Jim decides to take in serving our Lord through The Church of the Palms, his knowledge, interest and love for all that he does in the name of Christianity, will bode well for maintaining a positive membership.

When Jim speaks, sings, plays the piano/organ or is directing a choir, *people listen*, and they are richly rewarded.

He has our blessings!



Allan L. Gott

Member: The Church of the Palms – April 5, 1998

May 4, 2017

Jim Alexander has been a part of my life for many years. He has been by my side and an active part of our lives from weddings to funerals. He has embraced us and loved us for who we are.

Jim provided the music for my son's wedding and officiated and played for my daughter's wedding. Dearest to my heart was Jim's participation in my own wedding. My husband and I are both Veterans and decided to get married on July 4, 2015. Although I have known Jim for many years, my husband didn't know him. We met with Jim prior to our wedding. He spent time getting to know my husband. We shared our thoughts for our future life together and our thoughts for our wedding. Jim knew my husband had been suffering with his PTSD and had been a rock to me during that time. He and I spent time talking about what my future held being married to a man with PTSD. We planned our wedding and discussed our vows. Jim's true colors as a friend showed as he not only officiated but helped us set up for the wedding. It was a beautiful outside ceremony. Our family fellowship that surrounded the wedding will always be a great memory.

I lost my significant other to cancer in May of 2000. My children and I took care of his dog following his death. About 3 years later she began to decline. Jim and I would talk about her and how much she meant to me and the kids. As she declined I shared my grief with Jim. I knew that she would probably need to be put down but I also knew that I was not strong enough to do it. Jim, knowing my anguish, offered to take her to the Vet for me. We had tentatively setup for him to pick her up on a Thursday evening. She passed quietly at home the afternoon before. Although I know we are talking about an animal, she was a member of our family who was very loved. Jim gave me peace of mind knowing that he was there to help me through this tough time in our lives.

A church member from one of our old congregations had a son who committed suicide in their backyard. Jim stepped in for the family and not only consoled them but made the arrangements for his funeral to be at the church where we were both working. He officiated at the service and provided special music. We were all more than happy to help out with this service. That is Jim. He was there for this family and exceeded the expectations of most Pastors.

Jim and I were teachers together at an inner city school in Phoenix. Our students were 99% Hispanic and 95% second language learners. All of our students received free breakfast and lunch. Jim made a major impact on the lives of his students. He embraced their culture and celebrated with them. He also opened their eyes to a world they didn't know existed. He set the example we all want for our children. He dressed professionally. He shared their culture. He showed that he was a life long learner and how important it is. He introduced them to cultures around the world. He gave them the skills that they needed to succeed in life.

Jim has been with me through many trials and tribulations. My daughter is biracial and a lesbian. As a mother, I want the best for my children. I felt that I had somehow failed my

daughter. I was at a loss. Jim stepped in and was my guide. He helped us both through her identity crisis. He gave her support and skills to make the right decisions for her. He helped me understand what she was going through and how best to support her. He was supportive as she dealt with an abusive partner. Jim helped me as a parent, cope with the fact that she was an adult and making her own decisions. He embraced her personality, loud and happy, and gave her the support that she needed while also giving me the support that I needed. He continues to be a part of her life guiding her through life's ups and downs.

Jim is articulate and a life long learner. He is an excellent speaker and writer. He takes pride in his understanding of the English language and it shows in both his speech and his writing. He is very organized and is a great leader. Working with Jim in a professional capacity was a pleasure. He was always prepared and things were ready on time. Jim is also well versed at delegating and checking up to make sure that all expectations are met. He is a true leader in all ways.

If you need more information or clarification on anything please feel free to call me.

Harriet Fontenot
623-229-0042

Friday, April 21, 2017

Dear Church of the Palms,

I'm writing to express my gratitude to Church of the Palms for sending Jim Alexander during the passing of my Father, Myron Masny.

This past January, I called Church of the Palms and asked if someone could come to Royal Oaks, home of my parents, and comfort my Mother and Father during this time. My Father had just gone on hospice. It was a difficult phone call for me. My parents are members of the church, but have been unable to attend for awhile. The woman on the phone said someone would be there in twenty minutes. My Mother and I immediately felt relieved and grateful.

Within twenty minutes, Jim Alexander arrived, explaining that he was the music director but wanted to be there for us. He spoke to my Father, and showed genuine interest, discussing the WWII photos on the wall of my Uncle, and my Dad's college football team picture. I could tell it lifted his spirits, and that it was of comfort to him. Jim then lead us in a prayer.

I remember Jim came by to visit another day while we were in my Fathers room, and I was impressed by this attentiveness. I don't know, but he may have come another time while we weren't there.

I believe it is in part due to Jim and this expression of devotion to his Church and Faith, that my Mother has returned to attending Church of the Palms on Sunday mornings. My Family and I are grateful to Jim Alexander.

Regards, Mark Masny
Wakefield, MA

Diana E. Garrett
3315 W State AVE. Phoenix AZ, 85051.
623-826-7385.
prayingwings@icloud.com

April 26, 2017

Dear Ms. Hutchins:

I am honored to recommend Jim Alexander for the position of ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. I am confident that Jim will benefit your organization in four ways. He is a good communicator, a good empathizer, an adventurer, and a healer for people in a hurting world. I will describe his demonstration of the marks of leadership, compassion, intuition, and healing.

The first mark of ministry that I believe Jim has is his leadership. When I was in college Jim developed me as a singer by giving me melodies written for lower voices when I had been used to singing soprano. He respected me enough to give me a challenge which was more important to me than a grade. This gave me the confidence to lead a group on my own. He has provided me lifelong learning through these two opportunities for music classes.

The second mark of ministry to which I can attest is Jim's empathy such as a counselor would possess. Jim showed to me the mark of ministry of understanding mental health and wellness which I understand as empathy or compassion. He encouraged me to keep appreciating the beauty and joy in this life though I endured the tragic loss of my spouse due to cancer. Jim expressed his understanding of how sad I was but would not let me despair. His words about my husband's good life and his blessed eternal rest helped me know that my husband, Brian, was at peace. Also, Jim provided an opportunity for me to make new friends at chorus practice so I would not remain isolated and depressed.

Jim demonstrates the third mark of being surprised by the Holy Spirit. I see this as being intuitive. He noticed I was having a difficult time because I had to attend rehearsal instead of meditation class that met on the same day. I thought the only way I could achieve peace of mind was through quiet time at meditation class, but he showed me through allowing me to take a meditation break at rehearsal that I could achieve that same peace of mind. As a result, I was able to be successful at rehearsal and was awarded a solo that was very important to me.

The fourth mark of ministry that I see is Jim's healing a hurting world. He is eager to help blind and visually impaired people. Jim asked me to speak at a dinner in the dark about blindness where he participated in that dinner as an escort. I did not know that he was helping to organize that dinner, but he thought of me, gave me the opportunity, and wished to give me another opportunity to speak because of the new things I am learning to do in the school for the blind. Jim knows I am going to school to learn what is available for blind and visually impaired people. He listens to me tell him nearly every week about new voice computer technology and Braille computers for the blind. He wanted me to speak to his congregation to share resources that some of them may need to use, and that would make their

lives easier and happier. Jim continues to share other people's happiness and to inspire other people to maximize their potential.

Through various circumstances Jim and I have had a connection over the years. This began when I was a troubled student unable to communicate with a new teacher and progressed to our becoming good friends. In summary, I highly recommend Jim Alexander as a candidate for the ministry in the United Church of Christ. He is creative, compassionate, intuitive, and considerate. Please feel free to contact me at (623)-826-7385 or prayingwings@icloud.com for further clarification of Jim's qualifications for the ministry. I am happy that I met him when I was a student and that our paths have crossed again.

Sincerely,

Diana Garrett

March 2017

Jim Alexander/MID Recommendation

From Amy Alves, member of the Church of the Palms, MID committee for Jim Alexander.

Areas of Special Gifts:

I have been an active member of UCC Church of the Palms, Sun City AZ, for three years... attending bible studies, classes, events, and Sunday worship. I feel that I am representative of a significant portion of the people that attend this UCC Church. Being an observer of The Christ Love, through my eyes and ears, it is my desire to share my understanding of Jim Alexander's ongoing ministry at this UCC.

First, Jim always speaks to the people as he mingles with them. **He listens, honors and respects them as they share their concerns, issues, and joys.**

Second, Jim Alexander's ministry has always been a gift to me. **Each time he speaks the messages on Sundays he ties the messages and the music together.** When he speaks, or sings his heart is always filled with God and Jesus Christ.

Third, when **Jim Alexander serves communion with the Senior Pastor, the Holy Spirit flows through his words and heart.**

For me, I believe Jim Alexander honors the beliefs and values of the foundational structures of the United Church of Christ Southwest Conference.

Areas of his growing and continuing progress:

In areas of growing, Jim Alexander has shown me in the last 3 years that his external weekly connection with people in the congregation and his internal interconnection with various office personnel and volunteers that make up the body of this UCC Church has grown more each year.

Jim's connection to God and Jesus Christ has grown also as shown by his words of wisdom and songs of love as he ministers each week, especially on Sundays.

I believe Jim has met all the marks required by the UCC/MID to be approved to the call of ministry in the United Church of Christ and Southwest Conference Committees.

In Beloved Christ,

Amy Alves

Jim Alexander/MID Recommendation Format

To: Members of the COCAM A Committee of the United Church of Christ, Southwest Conference

This is an exciting time to be a member of The Church of the Palms. We currently have a Pastoral team that is set to propel us forward as a proactive force in our community by being the epitome of the extravagant welcome in our world. Personally, I believe that Jim Alexander is an integral member of this team. I believe that it is in the best interest of this local church, and UCC at large to grant him the standing that will empower Jim to participate fully as an Ordained minister of the UCC.

My experience of Jim is that he is a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. He is unassuming, and yet equipped to lead this fellowship of believers in their own personal Christian journeys. He is open, and enthusiastic about his faith, and his own personal faith journey. In his sermons, he encourages believers to have active faith lives, and to let their faith shine through in their everyday lives by how they treat others, by seeking out God in the everyday and everyone, and taking the time to go inside and listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

As a member of this church, he is active in the life of the church. One of his many gifts, is his ministry of music. His work with the choir has been a blessing to our church, and to other churches as well as the choir participates in inter-faith programs. He inspires and encourages the members of the choir, and that inspiration is shared by all those who hear. His music ministry nurtures this congregation.

I always look forward to Jim's sermons. It is clear to me that Jim seeks and follows the leading of the Holy Spirit in his sermons. He has the ability to get the attention of the listeners, and offer them new ways, or just remind them of tried and true ways to enhance their personal faith journey.

My experience of Jim is that he embodies the core values of the UCC: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives. His accomplishments are evidence of God's love at work in his life. His own personal journey has taught him what it means to be excluded from the body of Christ, and his faith has taught him that God is not an exclusive God. By his example, and by his embodiment of the teachings of Jesus Christ he invites people to listen to the calling of the Holy Spirit and experience the love of God for themselves thus changing their lives forever.

I believe that his experience in the secular business world has more than equipped him for handling necessary and appropriate administrative tasks. He is in a trusted and responsible position at his secular employment, and has proven himself to be a member of the church that is willing to do what needs to be done in order to make things happen... whether that is in worship, or organizing events outside the church, or supporting the Senior Pastor in taking care of the everyday needs of the church.

As to the elephant in the room ... I do recognize that Jim does not have a Masters of Divinity, and has expressed that he does not feel called at this time to pursue same. I understand the rationale behind this being a requirement for someone who is new to ordained ministry. However, I am inclined to think that in Jim's case the spirit of the law needs to prevail. It seems to me that Jim has exhibited his ability to learn, to share, to teach. Perhaps a Masters of Divinity might give him additional tools to deal with

someone who wants to engage in Theological head games, or who is looking for “ammunition” to use with people who are engaging them in such discussions ... however I believe that Jim has the heart to engage in the difficult conversations, and the education and ability to keep learning that will equip him as the need arises. I would also hope, that if this journey sees him becoming a full time Ordained Minister that his opportunities for continued spiritual development and education would further equip him in ways that he finds meaningful. Jim exhibits strong moral character and personal integrity and truly respects the dignity of all Gods people, in his communication and actions.

I believe that Jim’s life experience, his Christian charisma, his gifts, and most of all the power of his faith and his belief in the working of the Holy Spirit in his life and the life of this church equip him to serve with distinction as an ordained minister in the UCC.

Janet hutchins

To whom it may concern:

James Alexander is our Associate Minister who preaches with creativity, inclusiveness and skills which promotes spiritual growth within our faith.

I have known for James 4 years. He serves as our musical director .His devotion, skill and patience developed a lackluster church choir into an active choir that sings with great passion that inspires all.

He also developed a bell choir and under his guidance we have tremendous growth in both.

Our Pastor retired and James assumed a larger responsibility in assisting the interim pastor and developed organizational, administrative and coordinating skills within the church. His willingness to aid in any endeavor makes him an asset to us.

James has been on his path to become a Member in Discernment before he joined The Church of the Palms and he is in a position to continue strengthening his skills and spiritual growth.


We have been enriched with his impressive gifts, interpretations and presentations from the pulpit because he is so innovative and creative in his presentations that I reflect upon his messages during my daily life. James is proficient in his endeavors and inspires others to follow his leadership, whether traveling with the Fine Arts group or working with the kitchen group. **James leads by example and inspires others to follow.**

You may contact me if you need addition information or clarification.



Barbara Arnold, Esq.

Barbara2513@juno.com



April 30, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in reference to Jim Alexander and his skills in Church of The Palms.

In addition to his superior choir directing, his preaching is unique as well! When he preaches, his sermons have messages that fit my spiritual needs as well as others.

After the Bell Choir was created I was a member as I had never done anything like it before, and learned a lot from Jim's teaching abilities.

Jim is always available to the Church and members whatever the reason may be!

Sincerely,
Darlene D. McShane
(Member since 2000)
Church of The Palms



THE CHURCH OF THE PALMS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(Merger of the Congregational Christian, Evangelical & Reformed Churches)
14808 Boswell Blvd. — Sun City, Arizona 85351
Phone (1-602) 977-8359

Regarding Jim Alexander

His sermons are well prepared -
well delivered - spiritual - thoughtful -
and challenging.

He is outgoing - very personable
and greets everyone BY NAME -
that shows he cares and has made
a real effort to know each & every one
of the members & frequent visitors.

Personally I was deeply touched by
his example of forgiveness when he
had to be deeply hurt by some - He
came back with courage and true
forgiveness - a lesson for me & for all
that we must do likewise if we are
true followers of Christ

Peggie Grant



I want to tell you about the wonderful work Jim Alexander has done in a very short time with the Care Ministries Group at the Church of the Palms. This group has been meeting for several years but just barely hanging on. With Jim's leadership we have gone from a group just crawling to a group that is now running full speed ahead.

Our monthly meetings are now structured so that we are able to keep a closer contact with our home-bound members and their needs. We are trying to insure that no one is overlooked. We now have speakers that bring in information about facilities and programs and ideas that might further benefit both the home-bound and ourselves in our visits.

He has reinforced the transportation program. Names and phone numbers of people offering transportation are now available thru the church office.

Jim has started a program that insures that the flowers on the altar are shared with home-bound and hospital patients every week

I also look forward to the choir's anthem every Sunday. Jim Alexander has done wonderful things bringing fabulous music to the Church of the Palms.

Submitted with Love,

June Nielsen

From: "jf forests" <ifforests@gmail.com>

Date: May 2, 2017 2:49 PM

Subject: support letter for Jim Alexander from Joyce Stoffers email version

To: "Paul Whitlock" <pastorpaul1911@gmail.com>

Cc:

To Whom It May Concern:

It's a pleasure to write a letter of support for Jim Alexander on his path as a Member in Discernment. When Jim arrived at The Church of the Palms over 4 years ago, I thought he was only going to bless us with his impressive musical gifts, so I was delightfully surprised when he further blessed us by volunteering for many parts of the Sunday service, visiting the ill, organizing culturally enriching trips, and even rolling up his sleeves to work beside us during events such as our rummage sale.

When our pastor of 17 years retired, a large void was understandably left, but Jim stepped up to assume more duties and truly showed how versatile and capable he is; plus, he not only worked in obvious concert with our long-term pastor, but with the interim pastor, and now with our new pastor.

I always look forward to Sundays when Jim leads worship since I know it will not only be delivered with a clear, expression-filled voice, but with

personal examples and insights which clarify biblical passages. He blends traditional with innovative approaches, which having been a university professor, I truly appreciate.

During one service when the message focused on the many ways in which we can worship, he didn't just list the 6 ways in a conventional homily in a specific part of the service, but interjected them throughout, reinforcing them with appropriate parts of the service. For example, the opening hymn introduced the theme of worship with "O Worship the King," The section "We worship through giving" was followed by the offertory; "We worship through praise," was followed by the congregation singing 2 verses from "Sing Praise to God" and "Lord I Lift Your Name on High" followed by the choir singing "All People That On Earth Do Dwell." This integration of sermon and song made for a service that flowed seamlessly and made the points easier to remember in methodical modules.

Jim's proficiencies are enhanced by his qualities. He has a genuinely caring heart for the ministry that warms and inspires those privileged to experience it. Before or after a service he can be found going up and down the aisles to chat with the congregants, addressing them by name,

shaking hands or tenderly touching a shoulder, asking about an ongoing condition or an upcoming operation, encouraging the regulars, and welcoming the new attendees. His ready smile and sensitivity are so appreciated and he delights in often unexpected ways--like the time he sang a song and after the service my mother told him how much she liked his singing and the words, so he took his copy and gave it to her: she glowed with delight.

Since Jim Alexander leads by example and has inspired me and others to live out the UCC's purpose "To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves,"

I support him wholeheartedly. Feel free to contact me should you need additional details or have particular questions.

Yours truly,
Joyce Stoffers
14202 N. Baywood Ct.
Sun City, AZ 85351-2331
jfforests@gmail.com
[\(623\) 875-6960](tel:(623)875-6960)

Letter of recommendation for Jim Alexander

It is much too rare an occasion in life that we are asked to do what I am doing today. Jim Alexander has been a gift sent from above to fill our lives with love, to show us how to accept one another and to find good in all people and things.

When I was hospitalized a year ago it was Jim that walked through my hospital room door. Jim that came to comfort and pray with me. It happened at a time when our church was in transition between senior pastors. We were shorthanded with our interim pastor out of town, but Jim saw a need and jumped in to fill it. He listened, we talked, and then we prayed. I believe that caring for the sick is one the THE most important roles of the church. To hear the reassuring voice that God is with you and watching over you.

Being a member of the Trustees I guess it's second nature to watch and listen in and around church. How are things going? How are people feeling about church? Are people comfortable with our staff members and vice versa? One thing I see a lot of is Jim taking the time, making the effort to seek out people. Not just the outgoing people, but all people. He greets them and asks questions on how they are doing.

I look forward to what our church has to offer, what our future looks like, and what does the Good Lord have in the future for Jim Alexander. He is a gift, a blessing, and I look forward to many years of his ministry.



Frank Bauknecht

From: "Sandy Krueger" <rkruieger288@gmail.com>

Date: May 4, 2017 8:47 PM

Subject: Jim Alexander

Re: Jim Alexander

I am so happy to see Jim is going to be a pastor. I always look forward to his prayers, his readings, his sermons and his music.

The church he becomes pastor for will be very lucky. He brings a spirit of Christ presented in a magical way. He is very creative in his sermons. They are enlightening and the message is one any age can relate to.

He is very organized and always prepared both for readings, sermons and music. His sermons are creative with an added touch of humor.

I believe he will work well with members of the church. I am assuming in his training he has learned to counsel members in crisis. I am also assuming in his training he has learned to work with ways to encourage members to open up their pocketbooks. He has touched the heart of all our members. He recognizes members and he makes it a point to speak with each and everyone.

So, I wish Jim the best. He will do well.

Sincerely,

Sandy Krueger

2017

Jim Alexander is a deeply spiritual person with multiple talents. He works very hard to plan and execute excellence in a variety of church ministries such as:

Worship He works with pastors in developing worship services which include preaching, worship design and bulletin preparation. His interesting sermons have been inspirational and given us much food for thought.

Pastoral Care He makes pastoral calls and visits. He is a good listener and discreet. He frequently greets people in the hallway following a worship service and makes a lasting impression,

Education He exposes the congregation to a variety of experiences in music and arts. He works with others in the community to provide additional opportunities.

Music The choir has grown exponentially in size and experience under his leadership. He is an extremely talented musician. He plays the piano and organ, and is an accomplished vocalist.

He has been a great addition to our church staff and a willing worker. We wish him God Speed in his calling.

Bill and Jeannie Reeves

From: David Wilson <davesan2.dw@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Apr 24, 2017 at 1:50 PM
Subject: Jim Alexander
To: manager@thepalms.org

To whom it may concern:
I am pleased to submit this
email in support of Jim
Alexander's ordination.

The sermons Jim has given
have been outstanding, and
in one instance brought me
nearly to tears owing to its
depth and empathy.

In a larger sense I must include
Jim's outstanding musical
contributions to Church of the
Palms, because the man's
love of God and of mankind
are reflected in the quality of
his music as well as in his
life.

Sincerely,
David Wilson

From: CHARLOTTE HARGER <giantswon@msn.com>
Date: Sat, Apr 29, 2017 at 4:21 PM
Subject: Profile for Jim Alexander
To: Paul Whitlock <pastorpaul1911@gmail.com>

We at Church of the Palms were blessed in so many ways the day Jim Alexander came to us. The first thing we loved about him was his musical talents. He directs, sings, plays piano and organ, and was able to coax amazing sounds out of an old and long quiet choir.

We soon learned that music was only one of the many talents he possessed. He was open and receptive, hearing what it was the congregation wanted and needed. More people were becoming involved in our worship, because Jim welcomed them. His involvement in the every day life of the church kept growing.

Jim participates in Sunday worship doing readings, and giving sermons. His sermons are well prepared, have excellent content, are thought provoking, and always contain humor. He is an excellent speaker.

He is an important part of our Care Ministry program. He makes calls on people who are sick or in need of spiritual care. Jim is open, uplifting, caring, gentle, and quiet in a hopeful reassuring way. His prayers are heartfelt. I've heard him pray with one, with a small group, and with the congregation.

Jim's organizational skills are outstanding. Very helpful and a necessity for things to be accomplished in a timely manner.

Jim is a warm, welcoming person. Jim has the education, Biblical understanding and knowledge, love of people, inner strength, belief in and love of God, to be an outstanding ordained UCC minister.

Blessing, Jim

Charlotte Harger

From: Modeen Carolyn <ctmodeen2@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Apr 16, 2017 at 2:42 PM
Subject: Jim Alexander recommendations
To: Debi Martin <manager@thepalms.org>

As a member of the Care group at the Palms, I experience the fine things of Jim Alexander:

1. well organized
2. genuinely caring and kind
3. giving us visions to be guided by Worship on Sundays:
4. innovative;
5. displays walking humbly with God through Jesus Christ
6. consistent and steady—a good role model

Carolyn Modeen