

## IT'S ALL HANDS ON DECK!



Earlier this week, at the recommendation of the PNC, your Session voted unanimously to engage me as your full-time pastor for a period of three years. Why do that now? ***Because they know the time is ripe for this congregation to take a real shot at growth and you need pastoral leadership to do that. That's true, but I can't take that shot alone!***

My intern supervisor, (a proven wizard at new church development), had a mantra: "it's all hands on deck." That's my message for all of you, right now, as we reinvent ourselves post-pandemic.

Some might ask, "if churches have been emptying at a rate of 2.6% a year for over 30 years, do we have any chance at success?" It's a legitimate question; I've got two answers. The first one is, "YES," and it's solid reasoning, not just wishful thinking that makes me say that. ***Spirit is alive here!!*** This is a congregation that prays. You're a healthy congregation, (which is rarer than you might imagine). You have excellent leadership and sufficient resources to invest in an effort to reinvigorate your ministry. You are seriously generous with your time – and your money! Many of you care enough for those in need that you are willing to spend time serving them. It's part of your community identity. You welcome a genuine and deep conversation about faith in a world where people are just beginning to explore new possibilities. You know how to be friends; the level of fellowship here runs one step deeper than most. The population around you is growing, not shrinking. You've been faithful in the past and you're perfectly placed now to serve the spiritual needs of the community. ***Put all that together and I say, "Yes, we have a very good chance at success over the next three years."***

That said, my head is not in the sand. The sociological forces driving the shrinkage of the church are real; we cannot discount them. ***But whether our efforts to grow our numbers succeeds or not, we will become a more vital, more faithful, more dynamic congregation in the process!!***

***To be clear though, it is not just church growth that I'm interested in; I'm interested in your growth as well.*** I want to support you as you take the next step in your walk of faith. I want to encourage you as you struggle and celebrate with you when the Christ brings deep joy into your life. I'm glad I'm going to be around for a while to do that. So let's get to know one another over the next months. I believe our time together will be fruitful, impactful and fun!

***There is work to be done as we move forward together these next three years. It takes courage to take up the challenge and serve God in fresh ways. I have no doubt Rockville is up to the task if, and only if, it's all hands on deck!***

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sam Alexander". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Pastor Sam