

Alexander, Aruna

It took her three years to complete the program at Trinity College in Toronto. It was during her studies that she met and married her husband, David, a Belleville artist and high school art teacher.

The couple moved to Belleville in 1979 when David accepted a teaching post at Albert College.

"I was wondering what I was going to do in Belleville not knowing anyone."

So she joined the University Women's Club and a women's resource centre at Loyalist College that used to hold lunch hour seminars on various topics.

Alexander and three other women were so impressed with the college lunch hour program that they started their own version on the second floor of Century Place.

She also started taking a certificate program in marriage, family and individual counselling and eventually ran a small practice.

"Listening to people's life stories convinced me that the message of Christ is very important for living a meaningful life," Alexander said. "To use my leadership and interpersonal skills to bring a fuller vision of life to the community, I responded to the call of the ordained ministry."

Alexander was sent by the United Church of Canada into a one-year internship at the Apsley and Cardiff areas in North Hastings. She was sponsored for the ministry by the then-Tabernacle United Church in Belleville.

She was ordained in 1988 and returned north for a pastoral charge that lasted almost three years.

In 1991, she was called to the Rawdon-Springbrook pastoral charge.

Every Sunday since, she's conducted three separate services at 8:50 a.m., 10 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. at Springbrook, Mount Pleasant and Bethel

United Churches.

(She does one sermon at all three churches).

"I really love it," she said of her ministry. "We do special creative programming at all three churches. People are very committed and dedicated and I've really enjoyed working with them."

Alexander acknowledged the most challenging part is trying to make the life of Christ and the Scriptures of 2000 years ago relevant to today's world.

In addition to her Sunday duties, she also does hospital and home visitation on behalf of all three congregations, conducts Holy Communion services at nursing homes for Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving, carries out marriage and family counselling, and conducts weddings and funerals.

"The ministry is very engaging and intense but the wonderful part is that it encompasses all of life from birth to death."

It's been during her ministry's world outreach program that Alexander "connected with the United Nations and its work and vision of the world."

"I'm also realistic enough to know there is no place that is perfect in the world but that each of us while on this earth must give it our best."

Alexander set about to form a Quinte-area United Nations Association but not before she received formal approval from the national president in Ottawa.

She founded the local UN association five years ago and it celebrated its historic milestone with a public presentation at Albert College Oct. 26.

"We have about 40 members and we're also the smallest branch in Canada at the moment," she said proudly.

The local association helps plan three events a year — this week's public meeting featuring Geoffrey Pearson, national UN president, a model UN debate involving local high school students and leadership for the annual UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination held March 21 of each year.

"Our association is alive and well and has been supported by the community," she said. "The issues, of course, are global and large but what our branch tries to do in its vision and work is connect the local with the global."

"And to that extent, we're succeeding very well, I think."