

First Congregational UCC, Alexandria spent 5 weeks studying the theme

“Strangers No Longer.” The UCC Conference Immigration Team was very generous in helping our planning team. Joan Sylvander provided suggestions for weekly themes and speakers. The speakers came to our church to share their impassioned belief about the immigration story in Minnesota.

John Gutterman shared his knowledge of immigrants held in jails in MN awaiting hearings. Joan Elison, author of Faces of Change, told of her town’s effort to help immigrants assimilate. Jennifer Nelson of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition empowered our members to become active communicators with our legislature. Presently, there is a group of members actively keeping attuned to legislation affecting low income residents of our state.

The first Wednesday followed the theme, “When I was a Stranger, You Took Me In.” A West African student from our local vocational/community college helped us understand how we could be more welcoming to strangers in Alexandria. Joan Sylvander, Diane Haines and Sue George capped the last evening sessions with personal stories of their immigration experiences.

Through the UCC Immigration Team, our church members learned to be more compassionate, more knowledgeable in our actions as we confront immigration issues, and helpfully guided in what our faith tells us to do.