

Minnesota Conference Immigration Team (I Team) Annual Report -May 2017
Diane Haines, Chair

The Minnesota Conference Immigration Team has two purposes which have led our ministry this past year. The first is to engage local congregations to live into radical hospitality of our Gospel message to welcome the stranger by considering becoming Immigrant Welcoming Congregations. Last year at our annual meeting the Minnesota Conference voted to be an Immigrant Welcoming Conference, and to encourage our congregations to become immigrant welcoming as well. Secondly, we see our mission to speak prophetically to the church on issues impacting migrants. We take seriously the Biblical mandate to welcome the immigrant. (Leviticus 19:33-34 “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” NRSV)

The I Team has been active this year in the promotion of our UCC churches Becoming Immigrant Welcoming Congregations. From September to January, 5 church presentations were made. We held a forum in February which was attended by 15 congregations from around Minnesota, 13 of them were UCC. The focus of the forum was learning how to begin the journey of becoming immigrant welcoming and learning more about what is involved in becoming a sanctuary or a sanctuary supporting congregation. This was followed up by presentations in 10 congregations. In April a survey went to all of our UCC congregations to see where they are in the process of becoming immigrant welcoming. We are happy to report that at this writing 7 UCC churches have become sanctuary or sanctuary supporting congregations with others in the discerning process. Also several congregations are on the path to becoming immigrant welcoming.

Also included in the resolution to Become Immigrant Welcoming was a resolve to ask the National Church at General Synod in 2017 to become an Immigrant Welcoming Church. Four other Conferences, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Northern California, Nevada and Central Pacific joined the Minnesota Conference in presenting this to General Synod where the resolution was accepted to be considered.

We are grateful to the following congregations who either attended the February Immigration Forum, and/or invited us to their churches to present information about becoming immigrant welcoming, sanctuary or sanctuary supporting congregations: St. Anthony Park UCC, First UCC Minneapolis, Union SLP, Union, Elk River, South Cross, Parkway UCC, First UCC Mankato, UCC New Brighton, Peace UCC Duluth, Robbinsdale UCC, Living Table UCC, St. Paul’s Delano, UCC in Austin, St Paul UCC, and Mayflower UCC Minneapolis.

At a time when our country is faced with Executive Orders that threaten to separate families through deportation or detention, when discrimination toward our immigrant brothers and sisters is on the increase, the church needs to rise up and welcome and walk with immigrants and refugees.

Watch for more opportunities to take action this next year as the I Team increases its work in the area of increasing our prophetic voice in support of immigrants and refugees.. Please consider joining the congregations that are on this Jesus Path. We would be happy to walk this path with you.

Current members of the I Team are: Susie George, Nathan Syverson, Doug Spike, Rev.Dana Mann, Daniel Romero, Jim Bush and Diane Haines, chair. New members are welcome to join us.