

### **The Stamford Interfaith Collaborative: A Fruitful Midnight Run**

On a cold Saturday night in March 2022, over 50 members of Stamford, CT congregations and synagogues, came together in its first Interfaith Collaboration to a Midnight Run into NYC to provide food, clothes and caring to the homeless over several hours into the wee hours of the morning.

Midnight Run coordinates over 1,000 relief missions per year, in which volunteers from churches, synagogues, schools and other civic groups distribute food, clothing, blankets and personal care items to the homeless poor on the streets of New York City. That human exchange, rather than the exchange of goods, is the essence of the Midnight Run mission.

*"A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men." – Herman Melville*

While some of our members have been involved in Runs in the past, this was the initial effort of the Stamford Collaborative of 10 religious' entities. Leaving Stamford at about 9 pm, a group of nine adults and youth journeyed into the city with a truckload of goods driven by Rev. Robert Hewitt of First United Methodist of Stamford and a van in support, making four stops in Manhattan to distribute goods and share in conversations and fellowship with the homeless. Such an effort *"takes a village"* – a coordination of many across Collaborative Members to contribute, sort and organize clothes in both men and women sizes, ranging from socks and underwear, to shirts, hoodies, pants, jackets and shoes; to bringing food to a staging site at St. John's Lutheran Church where volunteers make hundreds of sandwiches, bag fruits, snacks, water for individual gifting; set up vats of homemade soups (made by a "pro" of St. Francis Episcopal Church) and coffee and ultimately load onto a truck and into vehicles. All told, easily over 50 people, adults alongside youth, contributed pre-event time, goods, money and on-site preparations to make the event possible.



The kitchen preparations, clothes and toiletries contributions and sorting areas can seem chaotic, but all come together to pitch-in and organize around whatever needs attention. Lisa from Temple Sinai, Carla from St. John's, along with Pastor Lingle from St. Francis coordinated all the preparations and assignments of who needs to bring what and how to organize logistics of the night.

Julie from Temple Beth El provides a nice summary: *"What a night it was! Members of the Interfaith Collaborative packed bags of sandwiches, snacks, and drinks. Amanda helped sort what seemed like a mountain of clothing into manageable bins that were loaded onto the truck. I found a sorority sister in the crowd who lives in New Canaan and belongs to Temple Sinai--who knew? We also saw a beloved Bi-Cultural teacher there who was involved through her church. It was an amazing effort by a great group of children, teens, and adults."*



*"The last stop of the night (close to Penn Station) nearly cleared the truck. My son had the opportunity to connect with one gentleman from Cuba who stood quietly in the back of the crowd while others crowded us and shouted out what they wanted. In the end, everybody received the necessities. It was a reflection of society: some never muttered a word of thanks while others told us we were beautiful people and thanked us profusely. Some were embarrassed to ask for and need help; others were loud in their requests because this was their means of survival. In the end, this was an exchange of humanity and goods that people could count on thanks to the Midnight Run organization. **We saw them and they felt seen.**"*

Plans are being put in place for a fall Run to include other members of our Interfaith Collaborative. This event and others jointly done within the Stamford community, and more planned, are indicative of the type of efforts the group is targeting – to have a bigger footprint and impactful outreach together to serve community needs.

*"Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much" – Helen Keller*