UU WORLDWIDE YOUTH NETWORK

UUWYN & the world wins

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For Immediate Release

Building Bridges Worldwide: UUWYN Mobilizes Youth, Faith Partners, and Communities for Global Service

New collaborations in Europe and Africa, combined with the launch of Connecticut's NIGHTLIGHT homelessness initiative, underscore UUWYN's expanding commitment to compassion-driven action

UUWYN To Send Global Youth Delegation to Germany's Unitariertag, Expanding Transatlantic UU Partnerships

(Hartford, CT USA and Köln, Germany) Following the successful launch of its *Building Bridges* program—through which the Unitarian Universalist Worldwide Youth Network (UUWYN) (UUWYN) sent youth representatives to the 47th Annual Dávid Ferenc Unitarian Youth Conference in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), Transylvania—UUWYN is once again broadening its international engagement. This spring, UUWYN will send a diverse cohort of youth to the **Unitariertag** conference in Cologne (Köln), Germany, taking place **May 22–25, 2026**. The event is organized by the **Unitarier – Religionsgemeinschaft freien Glaubens (URfG)** (URfG) Germany's national Unitarian religious organization. Youth applications to attend the Cologne, Germany conference are found here, youth seeking funding to attend should complete this application here.

UUWYN and the URfG share a long history of collaboration, beginning with youth exchange programs initiated in 2008 by UUWYN founder **Shahan Islam**. These partnerships have continued to flourish for nearly two decades. "**We are happy to invite youth from diferent continents to Unitariertag in collaboration with the URfG as a full-fledged member of UUWYN,**" confirms Finn Prem the leader of the Bund eigenständiger unitarisher Jugend (BeuJ) (The German Unitarian Youth Organization). "Our youth benefit immensely from these global friendships and shared commitments."

The **Unitariertag** is Germany's premier national Unitarian gathering—a biennial, multigenerational conference featuring workshops, worship services, cultural programming and the official assembly of the German Unitarian community. The event is known for its inclusivity, humanist orientation and alignment with global Unitarian Universalist values.

UUWYN Sponsors Sister Souurce's First Global Worship Exchange in Kenya

Over the Christmas holiday, UUWYN proudly sponsored the inaugural **Global Worship Exchange** hosted by **Sister Souurce**, the first organization dedicated to Black UU women and girls, founded by UUWYN Board Member **Rev. Crystal Saiyge**. UUWYN provided support for food, water, and internet/data access for local service-watch gatherings in Kenya. "**We must absolutely support the growing youth and UU movement in Africa**" emphasized Islam. Rev. Justine Magara, Vice-President of UUWYN, added: "**Sister Souurce's strength in Kenya creates opportunities for U.S.-based UUs and allies to build meaningful cross-cultural relationships and impact.**"

UUWYN Launches NIGHTLIGHT to Address Homelessness in Connecticut

In addition to its international initiatives, UUWYN is advancing domestic social justice efforts through the creation of **NIGHTLIGHT** (uuwyn.org/NIGHTLIGHT), a program inspired, in part, by two decades of engagement with the **Midnight Run** initiative in New York City and conversations with its Executive Director, **Dale Williams**. NIGHTLIGHT seeks to replicate the Midnight Run model in Connecticut by mobilizing worship communities and civic groups to conduct evening outreach runs—typically beginning at 8:00 p.m.—to distribute food, clothing, and essential supplies to individuals experiencing homelessness.

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A member of the NIGHTLIGHT team explains the urgency:

"Connecticut is facing its sharpest increase in homelessness in over a decade. Cuts to SNAP and food benefits have intensified food insecurity statewide. Major cities are reporting rising encampments and emergency calls. Many individuals cannot access shelters due to capacity limits, trauma, disabilities, or safety concerns. At night, the need becomes even more urgent as people struggle with cold, hunger, and safety risks while traditional services are closed. We believe NIGHTLIGHT will reduce hunger and cold exposure, prevent medical crises, ease strain on emergency services, and strengthen connections to shelters and support programs."

Mobilizing Interfaith Volunteers

When asked how a small organization can take on such a significant challenge, Islam responded:

"Of course we cannot do this alone. UUWYN will work collaboratively with community organizations, local police, the Unitarian Society of Hartford (hartforduu.org), Hartford International University for Religion and Peace (hartfordinternational.edu), the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), and other faith and civic partners. The NIGHTLIGHT logo itself incorporates symbols of many world religions; our mission is to mobilize interfaith and secular volunteers through a shared commitment to service."

UUWYN Vice-President **Rev. Justine Magara** added:

"Compassion is the principle that defines our Unitarian Universalist faith and our humanity. The best religion is one that gives out of compassion—not because we have much, but because we feel the conditions of others. Homelessness reveals that even a wealthy state like Connecticut has not sufficiently cared for those who struggle to live with dignity. Our work will break the loneliness experienced by those who have so little and with whom we share our communities. Blessed be those who give out of compassion."

Upcoming Engagement: Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative

This week, NIGHTLIGHT will host an informational table at the **Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative** at **Gideon Welles School**, 1029 Neipsic Road, Glastonbury, on **Saturday, January 10 at 2:00 p.m.** The event will feature a keynote address by **Bishop John L. Selders**, Organizing Pastor of Amistad United Church of Christ in Hartford and Assistant Dean of Students at Trinity College. The program will include musical performances, remarks from local and state officials, and community readings. UUWYN welcomes participation from partners, including representatives from Hartford International University, the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance GHIAA and the Unitarian Society of Hartford (USH) and all interested faith-based and school groups.

Those wishing to support the NIGHTLIGHT initiative may donate at: **https://uuwyn.org/donate/** UUWYN Inc. is a Connecticut non-profit organization granted **501(c)(3)** tax-exempt status by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. All donations to UUWYN are now tax-deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law.

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