Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD NOVEMBER 14 - 20, 2026

New Faith Formation Center Opens in *New Haven*

- Story by Shelley Wolf

Years ago, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth filled St. Stanislaus Convent in New Haven, where they lived and served local Catholics, especially as beloved teachers at the former St. Stanislaus School.

Today, the former brick convent at 15 Eld St. is finding new life as a hub for spiritual learning and growth — as the new Faith Formation Center for the sprawling, citywide Blessed Michael McGivney Parish. The first classes began there in late September.

"As soon as I walked in there, I knew this was the location," says Grace Torres, director of faith formation and parish life for Blessed Michael McGivney Parish in New Haven, who says the parish had been looking for a new place to center its faith formation efforts.

"We are one parish with eight churches. And we serve approximately 800 children, youths and adults through our faith formation programs, which bring a diversity of different cultures and different backgrounds," she says. "But the merger in itself is uniting."

"So, I feel that the Center is an opportunity to bring these cultures, these families, these needs into one. It just gives that dedicated space to all the children, youths and adults, families and catechists."

The city parish, which includes immigrants from Eastern Europe and Central and South America, has an especially diverse community. Now the Faith Formation Center is bringing them together for sacramental preparation and special events.

"We're holding faith formation programs there to start," Torres says, "including first communion, confirmation, adult confirmation and the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, or OCIA."



Blessed Michael McGivney Parish in New Haven has opened its new Faith Formation Center in a former convent. PHOTO BY EMILY NAYLOR

Family faith formation programs, begun last year, will continue to meet at St. Stanislaus Church and St. Francis Church, much larger meeting spaces. The St. Francis campus will also serve as a second faith formation location to improve accessibility for families without transportation. Classes on both campuses are being offered in English and Spanish.

Last summer, to ready the new Faith Formation Center volunteers cleaned up the building and swapped out furnishings. The interior was repainted and recarpeted, and three smart boards were added to assist the 75 catechists. The spruced-up space now provides three floors and a finished basement.

The first floor includes four classrooms, an office, a kitchen and a chapel. On the second floor, 14 rooms present future opportunities. "We have a vision of retreats there for women, men and youths," Torres says.

The third floor houses three classrooms plus three additional classrooms for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program. The finished basement provides a larger gathering space for meetings and special events as well as the Polish Saturday School.

The highlight is the chapel. "It's beyond programs," Torres points out. "It's bringing children to a deeper encounter with Jesus in a very personal way. This space will also help strengthen families in their faith. The best place for that is in the chapel in the presence of the Lord."

By uniting people from across the city, the parish also hopes to create a sense of belonging and Catholic unity, Torres says, especially among immigrant families who are members of the body of Christ.

"At the end of the day, and I see that with the kids, they just want to be loved, seen and feel a part of something," she says. "And that's where we get the opportunity to say, 'You are loved, you do belong and you're not alone. We are here to help you.' So, the Faith Formation Center is a key part in continuing that message of unity in New Haven."

Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER 20 @ 6PM
ENCOUNTER NIGHT
St. John Paul The Great Parish, St. Peter Church Hall, Torrington

Complementing our Healing Mass, we welcome Fr. Madejski of Blessed Michael McGivney Parish in New Haven to lead us into a deeper relationship with Jesus. Join co-facilitator Fr. Emmanuel to experience Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. Free admission. Come expecting: praise & worship, teaching, reflection and prayer teams.

NOVEMBER 20 @ 6:30PM **21+ Young Adults**
POTLUCK FRIENDSGIVING CELEBRATION
Our Lady of Knock Parish, St. Patrick Church, Farmington

Make new friends, eat good food and celebrate! Bring your favorite Thanksgiving dish or dessert to share! Followed by a Prayer Service for the Holy Souls. Join a candlelight prayer service walking through Riverside Cemetery, as we join our Church in this month of praying for our deceased loved ones.

NOVEMBER 20 - 21
48TH ANNUAL HOLLY BERRY FESTIVAL
Sacred Heart Academy, Hamden

11/20 Friday 3PM - 8PM & 11/21 Saturday 10AM - 3PM

Join the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at their annual Holly Berry Festival juried craft fair. Shop for unique Christmas gifts from 45 local artisans, plus one-of-a-kind items and delicious baked goods made by the Sisters. Enjoy raffles, children's activities, photos with Santa, food and more. All proceeds support the care of elder Apostle Sisters. Free admission and parking. Visit **hollyberry.org** for more information.

NOVEMBER 21 @ 9:30AM - 2:30PM
35TH ANNUAL FRANCISCAN CHRISTMAS FAIR
Franciscan Life Center, Meriden

Admission is free! Enjoy the Spirit of Christmas on this joy-filled day with something for the whole family. A wonderful Living Crèche Franciscan breads, pottery, food, handcrafted items, Merry Miscellaneous; fresh cut Christmas trees, raffles, Franciscan animals, and children's arts and crafts.

Visit **franciscanchristmasfair.org** for more info.

NOVEMBER 21 @ 10AM - 3PM
CHRISTMAS FAIR... WITH A POLISH FLAIR!
SS. Cyril & Methodius Church, Hartford

Admission is free! Please join us for our annual Christmas Fair with a Polish flair! This event features traditional Polish foods, homemade baked goods, crafters and vendors, gift baskets, vintage jewelry, cultural displays and imports, music, plus much more. It's a great occasion to shop, eat, and celebrate!

JANUARY 13 @ 7PM
SAVE THE DATE
REBOOT: A LIFE-CHANGING EVENT
St. Margaret Church, Madison

This high-energy, 2 hour event with internationally acclaimed speaker Chris Stefanick will awaken your faith, reignite your joy, and equip you with tools to live the life God created for you: A life of JOY! Event is perfect for everyone: friends, family, children (12+), and those who may not be actively practicing their faith.
Scan the QR code to secure your spot!

2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

As of today, 16.89% of all Archdiocesan parishioners raised $10 million for our Archdiocesan ministries.
Imagine the difference if one in four parishioners joined in.
Help us reach 26% participation in 2026!!

WE ARE ONE

www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal