

## Frankfort Franciscan Sisters and United Catholic Youth Ministries (UCYM) Announce Partnership

The Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart (FSSH) and United Catholic Youth Ministries (UCYM) announced their partnership on March 22, 2024, and are exploring ways of collaborating that will benefit local communities. FSSH is a congregation of women religious based in Frankfort, Illinois, and UCYM is a Catholic ministry based in Chicago that serves youth, young adults, and families within the context of their communities through faith formation, service work, worship opportunities, discipleship, and accompaniment.

“Through outreach to youth groups, we would like to see St. Francis Woods (the campus where the Franciscan Sisters’ motherhouse is located, 9201 W. St. Francis Road) become a unique and prominent resource for young people—a place where they can gather, join with our sisters in answering society’s needs, and share their talents and perspective, all while growing their faith. Youth like those in UCYM are the hope and promise of good things to come in our Church and in our world. They are the future,” said Sr. Kathleen Hook, Chair of the FSSH Franciscan Fire Committee, which seeks to further a Franciscan way of life.

“As a Benedictine and raised around Benedictine sisters, I learned from a young age how critical community is for all people, but especially for the development of young people. UCYM has always embodied the Church’s way of being a ‘community of communities’ in its foundation as a regional ministry that started in the four (now legacy) parishes in Evanston, IL,” said Oblate James Holzhauser-Chuckas, ObSB, a Third Order Member of the Benedictine Order with St. Scholastica Monastery in Rogers Park, Chicago and Executive Director of UCYM. “Youth are not tied down to parish boundaries and have shown us over the now six years that UCYM has existed how important it is for us to know and act as church; where **all** belong and can find a place to serve, worship, learn, and grow.”

With this partnership, young adults will be given opportunities to plan, promote, and assist at events and programs as well as take part in planning and holding public prayer services. Their faith reflections will be featured on the FSSH young adults’ blog, *Authentically You*, at <https://fssh.net/authentically-you/> and the spiritual companionship of the sisters will be available to anyone seeking it.

“We are grateful to the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart and religious communities like them for their accompaniment of young people and living the charism of what we call ‘youth and young adult ministry,’ which we see as the wholistic approach to integration of young people into faith communities. It’s not just about young people gathering on their own, as important as that is, but them being empowered, welcomed, and encouraged to be co-leaders in parishes, schools, and beyond. We are excited for this new path forward for the young people in the Chicagoland area, Frankfort, and beyond,” said James.

“Franciscan values can be lived out by anyone—not just by Catholics, not just by religious sisters but lay people of all backgrounds, too,” Sr. Kathleen added. “We will continually explore what we have to offer each other as our collaboration develops and grows. We hope that our partnership will animate people of all faiths and ages when they see the good that young people have to offer the larger community.”