

11/10/2022

5th Conference of the Network of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for Pastoral Health Care



From 5th until 9th October 2022 the Greek island of Rhodes hosted the 5th Conference of the Network of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for Pastoral Health Care.

The Patriarchal Network brings together Orthodox Christian Clergy and a variety of professionals working in health, from all over the world. It consists of representatives from the Archdioceses and Metropolises that belong spiritually and administratively to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and representatives from other jurisdictions. The aims of the Patriarchal Network include the provision of spiritual support and guidance to those who are ill, and their families, to promote a high-quality standard of health care, to assist and support those who minister to the sick, and to contribute to on-going education in ministering to the sick.

It also has a task force which can assist clergy, medical professionals and health care workers to manage difficulties that may arise in their ministry. As Patriarch Bartholomew has stated, “caring for the sick knows no geographical boundaries. It does not distinguish between race, people or language, but is directed without discrimination and without exception toward all human beings who are created in God’s image, as God Himself, the Physician of souls and bodies, did and does”.

Representatives at this year’s conference were (1) Rev Fr George Liangas, Parish Priest at St Nectarios Burwood, and Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, and (2) Presvytera Catherine Constantinidis, Social Worker and counsellor/psychotherapist.

This year’s conference was titled, Ministering to Mankind Today; We care for the Mankind of Tomorrow. As we are coming out of COVID-19 which has affected peoples’ health in so many ways, it is important to consider how the Church can best address, through its pastoral ministry, the needs of people who are affected physically, psychologically and spiritually in so many ways.

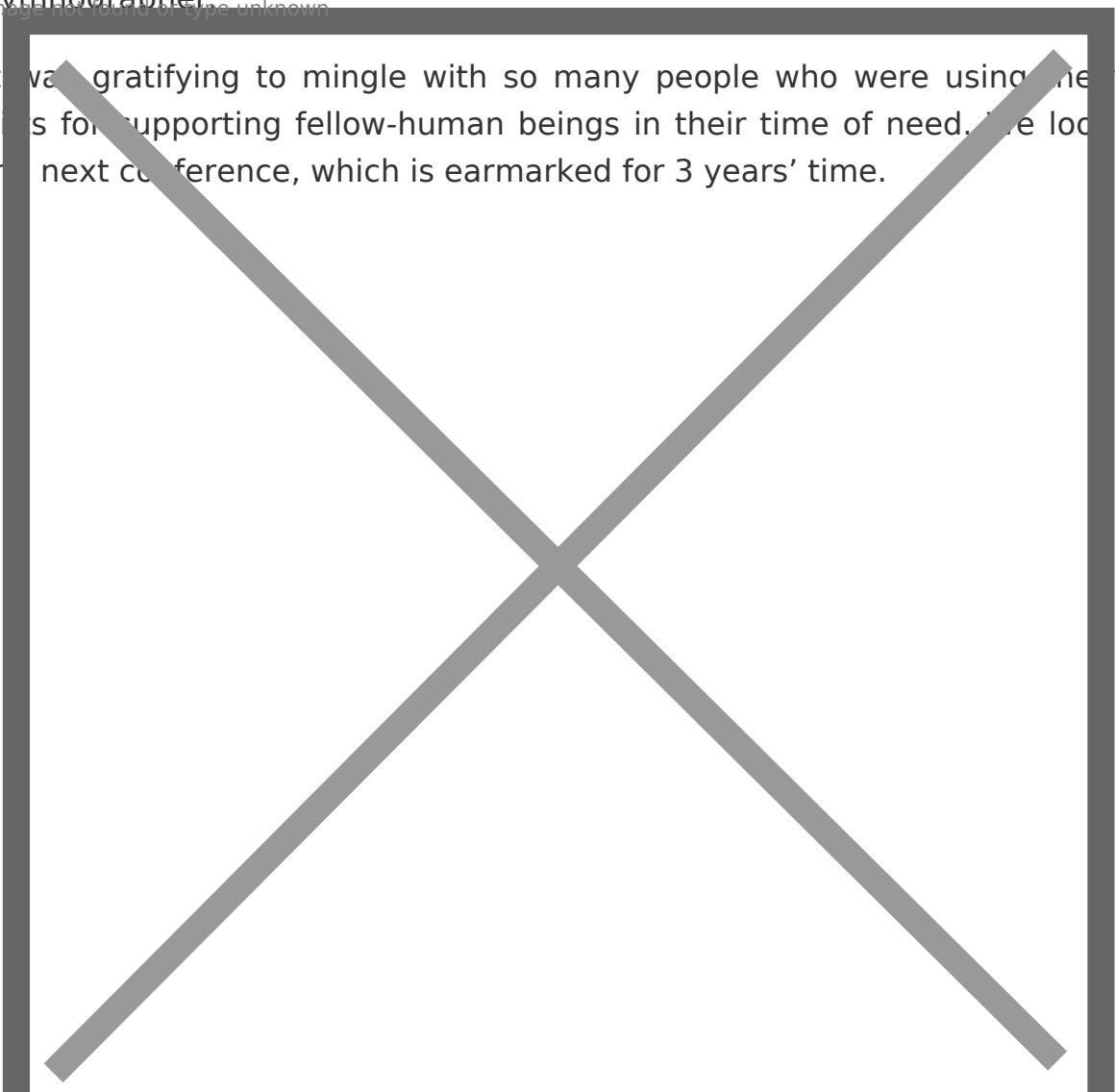
Some of the presentations at the conference included:

1. Difficulties in pastoral formation: how can priests be best supported to carry out their pastoral work.

2. Addressing challenges of religious instruction today; e.g. through catechism of people of all ages.
3. Bringing together health and religion in a way that is mutually edifying.
4. Addressing the scope of different age groups: For example, there was a forum where the youth from all over the world joined the conference via video link, and articulated their concerns for the future. One of those youth were Nathan Politis from the Parish/Community of St Nectarios Burwood. Because of the timezone differences, Nathan was up past 2am, and contributed to the forum in a very considered and articulate way. Discussion included navigating through the rapidly evolving family makeup and dynamics, and how the Church can assist in supporting the youth in a non-judgmental way, but instead, showing the embracing love epitomised by Christ Himself.
5. Discussing ways of further growing the Patriarchal Network of Pastoral Health.

During the conference there was a unveiling of a new Feast Day (17th October) for the Synaxis of all Doctor Saints. These saints included the Unmercenary Saints, Church Fathers who also studied and practiced medicine (such as St Basil the Great), and other healers, both male and female. There was an unveiling of the icon, as well as a new service that was written by the host bishop of the conference, Metropolitan Kyrillos of Rhodes, who is also a distinguished hymnographer.

It was gratifying to mingle with so many people who were using their God-given gifts for supporting fellow-human beings in their time of need. We look forward to the next conference, which is earmarked for 3 years' time.



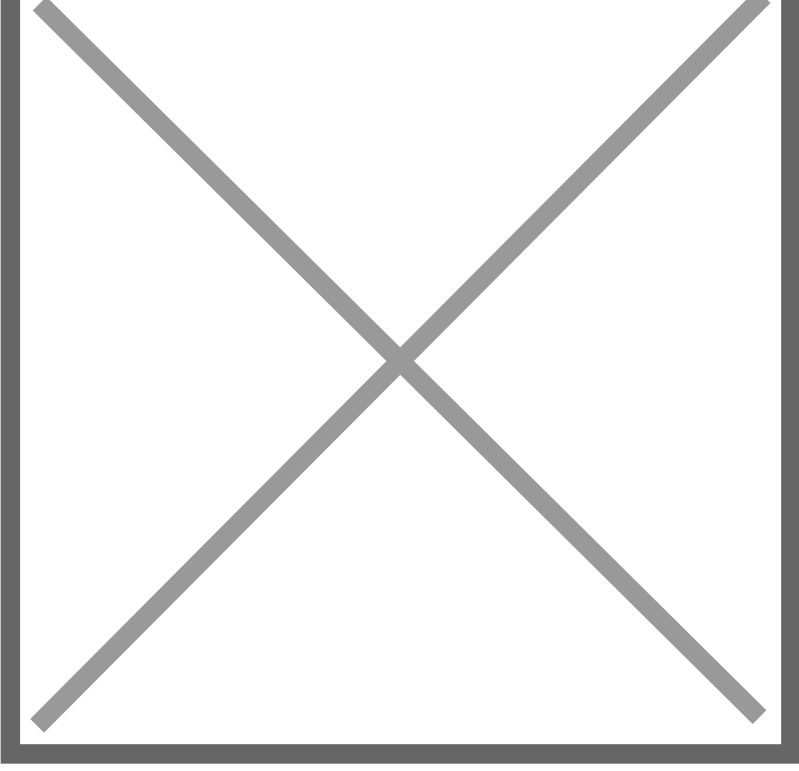


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