

## The European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy



***Coordinator's Report***  
***9<sup>th</sup> Consultation of the European Network of Health Care***  
***Chaplaincy***  
***May 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> 2006***  
***Lisbon, Portugal***

Six years ago in Crete, *the European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy* was officially formed. I say “officially” because for 10 years, national representatives of chaplaincies had been meeting every two years to share their experiences. In Crete, 23 representatives took part in the Consultation. The fact that 54 official representatives have joined together here in Lisbon verifies that the Network has indeed reached a high level of recognition and acceptance on both an international, European, national and Faith level.

In Crete, the question posed was whether or not a united chaplaincy could be established within a European context. After six years of hard work and careful planning, this consultation shows that we have overcome many barriers, that we have built many bridges and that we have truly grown into a higher level of maturity, a growth that gives us hope. In Turku, during our *7<sup>th</sup> Consultation*, the Standards for Health Care Chaplaincy were adopted. In Dublin, during our *8<sup>th</sup> Consultation*, we tried to pinpoint the tensions of European Chaplaincy on five levels: 1) the level of ecumenical dialogue; 2) the level of intra-church relations; 3) the level of multi-cultural issues; 4) the level of multi-disciplinary cooperation; 5) the level of the state (local, national and European). It was also during the Dublin Consultation that we adopted the Constitution of the *ENHCC*. It is also worthy to note that the President of Ireland officially opened our meeting. The aim of this, the *9<sup>th</sup> Consultation* of the *ENHCC*, is to stabilize the bridges we have built over the past years and to try to find ways of bringing our chaplaincies even closer together on a more practical level.

This Consultation, though, would not have been possible without the support and hospitality of the *Coordenação Nacional Capelarias Hospitalares*, particularly of its National Director Fr. Nuno Ferreira da Silva. Fr. Nuno's presence in the *ENHCC* over the past two years has been a dynamic one, full of energy, with a firm belief and commitment to the "Idea" of the *European Network*. I would also like to thank Fr. Vito Pinto of Portugal, who is the *European Coordinator of Pastoral Health Care for the Roman Catholic Church*, for his support throughout the whole organization of this consultation. Fr. Vitor's and Fr. Nuno's leadership and sincere warmth have been a true force in bringing us together and I am sure that their genuine love for chaplaincy will inspire us throughout our stay in Lisbon. Without genuine love, we, as chaplains, will fall short of being vessels of God's healing grace. Without genuine love, we cannot overcome our obstacles; we cannot build bridges between our borders; our hope for a well founded chaplaincy will never grow and each of us will not be able to grow personally in that hope. I am sure that we will take their warmth and love back home with us and that they will be a renewing force in continuing our ministry.

In addition to the Chaplaincy of Portugal, I would like to thank the *Association of Catholic Health Care Chaplains in German Speaking Switzerland*, and particularly Chaplain Marlene Inauen, for providing the funds to sponsor two representatives to this Consultation.

One of the most significant bridges that were built during the past two years is between our Network and the European Union. In leaving Dublin, it was clear that things had matured enough that we could finally proceed in making our way into the corridors of the offices of the Commission of the European Union. This, though, needed careful planning so as our efforts would be successful. Thanks to the help of the *Liaison Office of the Ecumenical Patriarchate* in Brussels, I was able to make contacts with three persons in key positions: *The European Policy Advisor on Dialogue with Religions, Churches and Humanism*, the *Commissioner of Public Health* and the *Vice-President of the EU Parliament*. After several letters and telephone calls, meetings were finally scheduled with these officials in June of 2005. (A detailed report of these meetings will be given during the following session of our Consultation). Here, I will only state that the meetings were successful in that we opened a direct line of communication with all three offices.

During our meeting with the Director of the Office of the Commissioner of Public Health, an unexpected proposal was made which will allow us to create closer ties with his office and to build a new bridge with the

medical community. We were informed that the Commissioner is very concerned about viewing the way palliative care is being handled in the European Union. He asked if we could contribute to a study of recommendations that was being done on this issue. In fact, after our meeting, I received a phone call asking that I meet with the person who was writing up the study. Indeed, Ms. Akylledis flew to Athens to meet with me where we had a two and a half hour meeting. At the end of our meeting, she asked that I make direct suggestions to the written report. After this meeting and the suggestions made, the Commissioner's office called and thanked the *ENHCC* for its impute. At this point, the study and recommendations of palliative care are still in the hands of the Commissioner, but this issue holds a series of future prospects for the *ENHCC* on many levels. It is a significant and specialized part of spiritual health care which brings us as chaplains in contact with the medical community and the official administration of health care facilities and policy makers. As a result of this development, we now are in a position where we can play a major role in this area on a *EU* level. For this reason, we will have a special session during this consultation on palliative care, coordinated by Rev. David Mitchell from Scotland, with the hope that we will be able to agree on a "statement on palliative care" at the conclusion of our discussion.

One of the other main bridges that have been built over the past few years has been with the *American Association of Professional Chaplaincy*. In March of 2005, the *ENHCC* took part in the Annual Joint Conference of the *Association of Professional Chaplains* and the *National Association of Catholic Chaplains* which took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico. *Chaplain Anne Vandenhoeck, Representative of the Chaplaincy of Belgium and a member of the Network Committee*, was our representative at this important event. There, she met with leaders of the *APC* and the *NACC*, establishing even firmer relations between our organizations and reiterating our desire to see how our chaplaincies could establish closer working relations. As an expression of sharing this desire, in their journal, the *APC* published the letter with our greetings to their conference. Today, here in Lisbon, we are most privileged to have two important people who have played a significant role in establishing a bridge over the Atlantic: *Ms. Josephine Schrader, Executive Director of the APC*, who is representing all the conjoint Chaplaincies of North America and *Rev. George Burn*. Ms. Schrader has enthusiastically embraced the idea of forming a closer relationship between our organizations and she will be speaking to us during a special session. Rev. Burn has actually been the "voice of America" in the *Eurochaplains yahoo group*, writing messages, expressing concerns, provoking stimulating dialogue, offering

encouragement and support, wishes and many prayers. Their participation here in Lisbon is historic in that we will have the first opportunity that I know of in which the Chaplaincies of our two great continents can sit down and discuss how we can share our experience and ability on a concrete level.

Besides our growing relationship with the *APC* and the *NACC* in North America, over the past two years we also established official relations with the *CAPPE/ACPEP* (*Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education*) and the *Professional Association for Spiritual Care and Health (PASCH)* in Japan. Our relations with the *Church & Society Commission Conference of European Churches* remain standing as we are officially informed of its meetings (as you may have seen in previous e-mails, particularly on issues related to bioethics). *Dr. Richard Fischer Executive Secretary of the Commission* has requested that we meet with him in the future.

Three publications regarding the Network helped build bridges in different directions. The *Southern Journal of Medicine* of the USA will be publishing any day now an issue in which spiritual health care will be examined. I was asked to write an article on “*Chaplaincy in Europe*” for this publication and, in a separate article, the *Euro Standards for Health Care Chaplaincy* will be present. This is a bridge toward the medical community. Chaplain Anne Vandenhoeck, who was asked to become a member of the Advisory Board of the periodical “*Plain Views – A Publication of the Healthcare Chaplaincy*”, was asked to write an article which was entitled “*A Challenge for the European Network of Health Care Chaplains*”. This is a bridge toward fellow chaplains throughout the world. The *Scottish Journal of Pastoral Care* published the paper that was presented to the officials of the EU with the title “*Spiritual Health Care and the European Union*” (Volume 8 No. 2, October 2005). This is a bridge toward a chaplaincy and a publication that is exemplary for us all.

Here I may add that in August of 2005, I attended the *European Conference of Pastoral Care and Counselling* in Sweden. This gave me an opportunity to meet many chaplains throughout Europe and people that were involved in pastoral care. Thanks to our beloved Network Committee member, Rev. Kirsti Aalto, who was then President of the *ECPCC* (*European Council of Pastoral Care and Counselling*), I was able to present our Network to all the participants during one of the sessions. At this important event, I made contact with Ursula Pfäfflin, *President of the International Council of Pastoral Care and Counselling*,

who is joining us today here in Lisbon as an observer. At the conclusion of the Sweden event, Fr. Adamantios Augustidis, who has been a long standing representative to the *ENHCC*, was elected President of the European Council. His presence here in Lisbon, together with Ms. Pfafflin's, will allow us to join our efforts in establishing united efforts in the area of chaplaincy and pastoral care at large.

What though is most encouraging is that we as a Network have grown within! This is indeed what is most important! As I stated, we have reached a point of growth that truly gives us hope! In planning this Consultation, the Network Committee told Fr. Nuno that no more than 40 to 45 representatives would probably come. We have over surpassed ourselves! In Crete, 22 official organizations took part in that historic consultation. Today, here in Lisbon, we have reached the landmark of 46 official organizations that take part the *ENHCC*. The new participants in our Network are the:

- (1) Department of German Catholic Bishops' Conference
- (2) Patriarchate of Moscow
- (3) Lutheran Evangelical Church of Slovakia
- (4) Pastoral Healthcare Department, Episcopal Conference of Spain (Roman Catholic)
- (5) Association of Swiss Protestant German Speaking Chaplains (We have been in contact but this is the first time they have been at a consultation in recent years - since 2000)
- (6) Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains in UK
- (7) Metropolitan Commission for Pastoral Health Care (Ukraine)
- (8) Orthodox Church of Albania
- (9) Reactivated link with Denmark (Danish Association of Chaplains in Healthcare)

Allow me to officially welcome all of you and I am sure that your presence in the Network will enrich us in many ways.

This brings us to a very important issue which we hopefully will be facing throughout our deliberations here in Lisbon. ***How can we as a Network of European Chaplaincy work closer together in building bridges amongst ourselves?*** For this is the reason for our Network's

existence and if we do not answer this question we will fail! This past October, the Network Committee met in Istanbul at the Ecumenical Patriarchate for our annual meeting. One of the main issues we discussed was how the participants of the Network could increase sharing their experience and knowledge with the other participants. One of the main reasons for our existence is that we have all realized that we cannot remain isolated in our own Chaplaincies, particularly in a world where cultures are meeting, overlapping, and trying to integrate in a way of life which is “multi” in character. In today’s world, Chaplaincies not be self-sufficient. As I wrote to you shortly after our departure from Dublin, “*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. (Eccles. 4:9-10)*”. So it is that in Istanbul, it was decided that a special session would be held during our meeting here in Lisbon to find concrete ways of building firmer bridges of exchange and support amongst our organizations.

During the past two years, two Chaplaincies took a leading role in this effort: the *Latvia Association of Professional Health Care Chaplaincy (LPVAKA)* and the *Protestant Hospital Chaplaincy of France*. Both of these organizations dealt with chaplaincy in a “European perspective”, inviting representatives from other chaplaincies to speak. Fr. Adamantios Augustidis and Chaplain Anne Vandenhoeck spoke in Latvia and Rev. Kirsti Aalto and Fr. Angelo Brusco spoke in France.

In an effort to promote interrelations between our chaplaincies, *ENHCC* greetings were sent to national chaplaincy conferences that took place in Ireland (where they celebrated their silver anniversary), France, Finland, Latvia, the Roman Catholic Chaplaincy of Germany, and the Pontifical Conference for Palliative Care.

The main source of sharing for the Network has been and remains to be the *ENHCC* Website. Thanks to the dedication, talent and continual inspiration of our devoted webmaster, *Rev. Fred Coutts*, our web site has won praise from all over the world. Without him and his genuine interest in communicating with us all, our Network would not have grown the way it has. Special thanks and applause should be given to our webmaster!!!

Over the past two years, we attempted to form an *ENHCC* electronic library to allow for academic sharing. Chaplain Anne Vandenhoeck was asked to take a lead in this effort. Unfortunately, this effort has not

blossomed as we hoped. This is something we can talk about in our upcoming sessions.

The Committee signalled out two areas we need to deal with in order to help us all form a better understanding of each other and foster further relations. One is to develop a better understanding of our theological perspectives in relation to the way we provide spiritual care and the way our Chaplaincies are structured. The other is to try to see how the multi-cultural issue in chaplaincy is dealt with on a very practical basis. (This was something that the officials of the *EU* challenged us on this past June). As you will notice, two separate sessions during our Consultation will be devoted to these issues.

Lastly, the legal status of the Network must be discussed. As most of you remember, during our last consultation in Dublin, we adopted our first Constitution. In itself, this constitution did not have any real legality outside of our own organization. It was necessary to legalize our organization under a legal system of a European country. In order to do this, the Network Committee authorized me to proceed and legalize the Network under Greek law, using our “Dublin” Constitution as a basis. This was done and we now are an official *non-profit making organization*. As a result we were able to open a bank account in our name. The Network Committee appointed Rev. Derek Brown to help in keeping track of our financial standing. The next step we must take is to become a *NGO (Non Governmental Organization)*. This will allow us to eventually receive government grants on a national and/or European level. In our last session, I will give you a full analysis of our financial standing.

While the members of the Network Committee met in Istanbul this past October, we were blessed in having an audience with the *Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*. In that meeting, His All-Holiness remarked *that our mission as spiritual health care providers is to be an expression of God’s philanthropy which “does not know geographical boundaries, does not distinguish race, people or language, but is directed indiscriminately and without exception to all men and women, who are created in God’s image, as God Himself.”* The Patriarch’s remarks have a very deep meaning for us all. Whether we are involved in the provision of care, rehabilitation, chaplaincy or ministry to or with those who have been disabled by suffering and sickness in a physical, psychological or spiritual way, we must recognize the central assumptions of equality and dignity within the message of hope we bear. We are called to proclaim this message of hope at the fore of all our work, a hope which is deeply

rooted in God's grace. In this aspect, we are not to be spectators of divine interventions and actions, but co-workers of His grace. But to become true co-workers of His grace, we must accept one another, not only as co-workers, but as friends. For, it was He who first spoke to us as friends (John 17). If our hope is in His love, we must abide in His love as He has loved us. It is only then that we will truly be an expression of God's unlimited and boundless Philanthropy. Hopefully, the bridges we build during these days in Lisbon will help us, with His guidance, to cultivate our friendship in and through His love.

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***(Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate)***