KNOW GOD BECAUSE GOD KNOWS: Mental Health and Faith Conference

The most important answer to the misunderstood health problem

**Haringey, London, August 18th, 2018**: The Nous Organization in collaboration with the Peace Alliance organized a conference on mental health and faith, which began at 10am. A diverse range of qualified experts in the health sector and faith groups contributed to the discussions, focusing on a central theme of equipping and informing faith leaders and members on relevance of faith in impacting mental wellbeing.

The Mental Health and Faith Conference carried on being a significantly positive start to much needed conversations on contributing factors to failed mental health, considering the role of faith communities in such factors. The start of the event was piloted by one of the conference moderators, Lade Olugbemi, Founder and CEO of The Nous Organization, with an opening statement which included the drive and purpose behind the conference, stating that the importance of knowledge and understanding mental health plays a part in overcoming stigmas attached to mental instability within faith communities.

Dr Leah Akinlolu and Dr O B Owolokere both kicked off the conference with ten-minute informative presentations each, consistent with the definition of mental health alongside its causes and symptoms. Additionally, sufficient biblical references were used to elaborated on the significance of faith in sustaining mental wellbeing; many of which further deducted the cruciality of faith and hope for each believer, regardless of their state of mind. These scriptures included John 15:5 and 1 Timothy 6:12.

Father Bunmi Fagbemi, the Parish Priest at Holy Trinity Church who gave the honour of speaking briefly before his departure, blessed the guests with direct yet subtly comforting words of wisdom on faith, that brings about stability. In short, his cross reference of bread as daily food to Jesus who is the bread of life (John 6:35) provided the audience with a strong basis for the state of the mind being majorly dependent on the relationship of each person with Christ.

After a brief refreshment break that followed Father Bunmi’s speech, Reverend Nims Obunge, Pastor at Freedoms Ark and Chief Executive of the Peace Alliance, introduced the final speaker, Rachel Ross- Burrell, who came on and addressed what she titled “Developing Mental Health Framework for Faith Communities”. With a compelling scripture-based introduction, Burrell’s breakdown of 1 Thesselonians 5:23 was a suitable way to shed more light on the predominant role of faith communities in sustaining mental wellbeing, especially amongst those whom they have easier communication with; believers.

The final segment of the programme can be described as the ‘cherry on top’ of what had already been a successful run of events. The Q and A session was packed with back to back testimonies and questions that steered the conversation in the right direction. Questions about suicide, neglect, misunderstanding, support for members and leaders of church and fellowship communities and several other themes surrounding potential threats to mental health or stability were brought to the attention of the speakers by the audience. Although brief, the Q and A session imparted further knowledge on mental health and the support systems available, specifically in the Haringey Borough such as the Haringey Adult Mental Health Services. More importantly, the session led to a new wave of thinking from members of the audience; a fresh hunger not to leave questions unanswered as majority of the audience connected with the speakers and other members to ensure the conversations keeps going.

All in all, the Mental health and Faith conference was monumental in spearheading an overdue conversation on mental wellbeing and its connection to the faith and church communities. After this two-hour event, several people in attendance testified to a “stirring up”, which is classed as a positive physical and spiritual response, caused by the message of the conference. A well organized and managed spirit led event that will be remembered as the beginning of a new era.