

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Suprasl Launches Orthodox Youth Environmental Leadership Program

The international Orthodox youth fellowship, Suprasl, recently announced the launch of an environmental leadership program with a call for applicants for its first cohort scheduled to begin on Thursday March 6, 2023. The program, a first of its kind in the Orthodox world, will consist of several online and offline elements. The first element of the program is a short-term online educational course focused on providing basic knowledge and understanding on the theology and spiritual teaching of the Orthodox Church on ecological matters, teaching about modern environmental challenges and raising the capacity of Orthodox youth to respond in a practical way to those challenges.

The environmental leadership program was developed by participants of Suprasl's 2022 World Gathering of Orthodox Youth, who during the gathering in July 2022 were inspired by a series of presentations by Dr. Elizabeth Theokritoff. The program continues a long tradition of Orthodox youth working in this field and builds on the work of Syndesmos which in the 1990's organised the first ever "Orthodox Youth and Ecology" training seminar in Neamt, Romania 1994, and in 1995 published the well known, "Orthodoxy and Ecology: A Resource Handbook", as well as organising dozens of Spiritual Ecology Camps on Mount Athos, Valaam monastery and other locations throughout the 1990's.

"With this project we hope to stimulate interest and develop the educational basis for Orthodox youth to develop projects and actions that will directly contribute to the protection and renewal of the natural environment", said Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, Suprasl director.

Consisting of three online modules and additional meetings during the month of March, the course will explore three major themes: 1. the environmental situation at a glance: science, policy, and public background; 2. introduction to Orthodox theology and church positions regarding environmental issues; 3. practical Church community and environmental actions. The three 2 and a half hour class sessions will include a core presentation, Q&A session, and guided work in small groups. It is planned that participants will also attend additional thematic presentations by environmentalists and theologians.

The program has been developed by Mr Eugeniy Lobanov, a Belarusian environmentalist, who has been working on the national and international level for 20 years in the area of sustainable lifestyles, chemical safety, and waste management; and Mr Sergey Yushkevich, a graduate of the Orthodox Theological Institute of the Belarusian State University who specialises in working with church communities to implement practical and concrete ecological projects.

The program is open to Orthodox Christians between the ages of 18-35, and will be conducted entirely in English with main activities taking place on Thursdays in March between 18:30 - 21:00 CET (12:30 - 15:00 EST).

"With the successful implementation of this first project, we hope to repeat the first level training two or three more times throughout 2023, with an eye to implementing higher level training in more specialised modules in the future," said Eugeniy Lobanov, program director. "Since 1991, when a Pan-Orthodox Conference on the environment was held in Crete, the Orthodox Church has been at the forefront of responding to the ecological crisis. With this program we hope to encourage and equip a new generation of Orthodox Christians to work in practical ways to renew the natural environment, and to build long-lasting connections between them."

For more information and to apply for the program please visit www.suprasl.org/ecology

Suprasl, A World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth is an association that seeks to network and bring together youth from around the world. It was founded in the Summer of 2022 following the success of Suprasl 2022: A World Gathering of Orthodox youth which was held at the Monastery of the Annunciation in Suprasl, Poland. Its projects are funded in part by a grant from the Orthodox Vision Foundation.

