

Archbishop Justin Welby hosted a major conference today exploring how disabled people can participate fully in the life of the Church.



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, hosted a major conference on disability at Lambeth Palace today to explore how disabled people can participate fully in the life of the church.

The day considered what barriers disabled people can face in church life, and what churches can do to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to take part and share their gifts and talents.

It was also a chance to celebrate those places and individuals who have enabled increased participation within the Church for those with disabilities.



Livability, the disability charity that connects people with their communities, partnered with Lambeth Palace in the development of the conference, and helped to shape the conference's discussion agenda for the day. Archbishop Justin Welby is President of Livability.

The day began and ended with worship, rooting discussions in the life of the Church and the valuable role disabled people have within that. The day also put the voices of those with lived experience of disability in the centre, through videos and live discussions.



The conference was facilitated by Kate Monaghan, a Christian journalist and filmmaker who presents the BBC Ouch disability podcast.

John Swinton, Professor in Practical Theology and Pastoral Care at Aberdeen University, gave the keynote speech.



Professor Swinton, who is also a minister in the Church of Scotland and a registered nurse, said the Church is called to be – and has “huge potential to be” – a place where people are valued and belong.

Human rights are vital and guarantee inclusion for people with disabilities, he said, but they do not guarantee belonging.

“We need another dimension; a dimension that the church brings to the conversation that may not be available within standard approaches to disability that focus only on issues around justice and social inclusion.”



Archbishop Justin Welby said: "Today has been humbling, challenging and inspiring. I passionately believe that these kinds of conversations – and especially this kind of deep listening to those with lived experience of disability – is absolutely vital if we are to be a Church where everyone is valued and everyone belongs."

"The report 'Setting God's People Free' clearly spoke of the challenge to 'empower, liberate and disciple 98% of the Church of England who are not ordained and therefore set them free for fruitful, faithful mission and ministry, influence, leadership and, most importantly, vibrant relationship with Jesus in all of life'. This conference has been a key step towards that goal, and I pray that we take hold of the ideas, challenges and opportunities that have emerged from today."





Roy McCloughry, National Disabilities Advisor for the Church of England, said: "We want to affirm the fact that disabled people belong in the church because without them, their insights and their gifts the Church itself is disabled and cannot function as the Church. We are committed to increasing the diversity of the Church of England and today's conference is a moving, encouraging and challenging marker on that journey."

Mat Ray, Head of Church Partnerships at Livability, said: "Livability are pleased to have joined the conversation at this key event. Working for the full participation of disabled people in our society is so important and churches have a vital role to play in this."



To mark today's event, Livability have launched a new resource called 'More Than Welcome' to support churches in creating a place of welcome, inclusion and participation with disabled people. Based on the idea of a journey – the resource is designed to help churches go through three important stages, from a place of welcome, to inclusion, to participation. The resource provides inspiration, guidance, stories and tips of things to work on to see people fully taking part.



Find out more

Watch the three short films that were shown at the conference [here](#)

View more pictures from the conference [here](#)

Find information and resources about welcoming disabled people on the Church of England website [here](#)

Livability's 'More than Welcome' resource is available [here](#)

For more information about Livability, visit their website [here](#)

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/latest-news/archbishop-canterbury-hosts-disability-conference-lambeth-palace>