



Disability statement

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The Diocese of London's vision

The Church holds the vision of being a community in which all people can fully participate and find acceptance and value.

In adopting our 2030 Vision 'for Every Londoner to encounter the love of God in Christ,' we recognise that 'every Londoner' not only includes the full range of ethnicity, social status, orientation, and lifestyle, but also the full variety of embodiment, sensory and cognitive shape, and neurodiversity that make up the rich diversity of humanity across the diocese.

We recognise that the presence, experience, perspectives, and ministry of disabled people enrich what the Church is, and we are committed to breaking down barriers and creating pathways to enable disabled people to contribute fully to the ministry and leadership of the diocese.

Within our 2030 Vision, we are making a new commitment to diversity and inclusion and seeking to be a church in which all people feel they can belong as unique and valued children of God.

We view this as an issue of kingdom justice and a part of our calling to live as the people of God.

A Gospel for all

The Gospel is good news for disabled people.

The ministry of Jesus is one in which many sick and disabled people are brought from the margins of society into the centre of the kingdom.

In 1 Corinthians 12, St Paul speaks of the church as a body in which the honoured and less honoured are of equal value, and in which the 'dishonoured' parts are given 'special honour.'

The discrimination that disabled people experience is a result of society's lack of acceptance and understanding of the full breadth of human embodiment. It is the dishonouring and devaluing of people who are created in the image of God. *Recognising this places on the Church a calling to give 'special honour' to those experiencing disability discrimination, social exclusion, and isolation.*

Disability led

The voices and experiences of disabled people are vital to shaping a church for all and no change can take place without the leadership of disabled people.

To facilitate this, we will support and resource the role of the Diocesan Disability Ministry Enabler and establish a Diocesan Disability Working group as a forum where disabled people can challenge and inform diocesan policy and practice.

The need for repentance

We accept that the church is a flawed institution in which many are marginalised because their bodies and minds do not fit into a narrow definition of 'normal.'

Misunderstanding, prejudice, and destructive attitudes have created and maintained barriers that have stifled and diminished the contribution of disabled people.

A vital foundation of becoming a church in which 'every Londoner can experience the love of God in Christ,' is to repent and seek God's forgiveness for all that excludes and marginalises many disabled people.

We recognise that:

- The church has failed to honour disabled people in the past and continues to fail in this today.
- Churches are often not equipped to be places of equal access, welcome, participation and belonging for disabled people.
- The church's language and liturgy can be insensitive to disabled people and contribute to feelings of marginalisation and exclusion.
- Our theology and interpretation of scripture can alienate disabled people rather than drawing all into the Kingdom of God.
- Disabled people are not represented in the ministry and leadership of the church in sufficient numbers or variety to reflect the breadth of human diversity and embodiment that exists across society.
- The value and rich potential that disabled people could bring to the church is not recognised or encouraged to flourish.
- There are many aspects of the church and current models of ministry that create barriers and exclude disabled people whose minds and bodies do not fit into the narrow field of 'normalcy' that the church has adopted.
- The church needs to seek a new understanding of disability and express a theology and ecclesiology that breaks down barriers and releases the unique perspectives and gifts of disabled people.
- Conscious and unconscious bias and prejudice and misunderstanding diminish the potential for disabled people to find a place of personal and spiritual flourishing within the church.
- A 'disability perspective' should be included in all that the church seeks to do and say in the world and society, allowing the voices of disabled people to be heard in every context and situation.

We will therefore

- Work for radical change and embrace a new vision of what a 'church for every Londoner' should be.
- Make a new commitment to include disabled people as equal partners in the church's striving for greater diversity, equality, and inclusion.
- Increase disability understanding and awareness at all levels of the Church
- Devise and implement imaginative and flexible policies which will enable disabled people to take a full part in all aspects of the church's life and ministry.
- Repent, reflect, and take action to transform the Church into a place where disabled people are not judged, labelled, categorised, or defined by those who operate from within an 'ablest' paradigm.

Drafted by John Beauchamp and the Disability Working Group