



Queen Urges Inclusivity In Commonwealth Message

The head of the Commonwealth says working for the common good is an essential ingredient of belonging to the family of nations.

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Image Caption: The Queen is the head of the Commonwealth

The Queen has urged people to support "those in need" and others who "feel excluded" in her annual message to mark Commonwealth Day.

She said helping those less fortunate would be a way of embodying this year's Commonwealth theme of inclusivity.

The Queen's message will form part of the annual Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey being held this afternoon.

In her message, the Queen, who is head of the Commonwealth, wrote: "Today, and in the year ahead, the theme An Inclusive Commonwealth is an inspiration for us all.

"Let us give it practical effect by supporting those in need and those who feel excluded in all walks of life. By doing so, we will continue to build a truly representative Commonwealth community."

The Queen also said working together for the common good was an essential ingredient of belonging to the family of nations.

"Each of us has cause to celebrate the sense of belonging expressed in our 2016 theme: An Inclusive Commonwealth," she wrote.

"Our recognition of this value, and the wisdom of mutual respect for each other, is set out in the Commonwealth Charter. Its opening words, 'We the people of the Commonwealth' convey the conviction that individuals, as well as governments, build and shape our success.

"Being inclusive and accepting diversity goes far deeper than accepting differences at face value and being tolerant.

"True celebration of the dignity of each person, and the value of their uniqueness and contribution, involves reaching out, recognising and embracing their individual identity."

The Commonwealth has 53 member countries representing 2.3 billion people.

The Westminster Abbey service will be the largest annual inter-faith gathering in the UK and will be attended by members of the Royal Family and a host of dignitaries.

Highlights will include the principal reflection given by Kofi Annan, former UN secretary general, and a musical performance by Ellie Goulding.