

John Swinton

Biography:

John Swinton is Professor in Practical Theology and Pastoral Care and Chair in Divinity and Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen. For more than a decade John worked as a registered mental health nurse. He also worked for a number of years as a hospital and community mental health Chaplain alongside of people with severe mental health challenges who were moving from the hospital into the community. In 2004, he founded the University of Aberdeen's Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/sdhp/centre-for-spirituality-health-and-disability-182.php>). The Centre aims to enable academics, researchers, practitioners and educators to work together to develop innovative and creative research projects and teaching initiatives within the areas of spirituality, health and healing, the significance of the spiritual dimension for contemporary healthcare practices and the theology of disability. He has published widely within the area of mental health, dementia, disability theology, spirituality and healthcare, qualitative research and pastoral care. John is the author of a number of monographs including *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefulness and Gentle Discipleship*. His book *Dementia: Living in the memories of God* for which he won the Archbishop of Canterbury's Ramsey Prize for excellence in theological writing. (<http://www.michaelramseyprize.org.uk/>)

Title of Plenary Lecture:

"Health Care and Social Isolation: Theological Reflections"

Abstract:

With a central focus on inspiring person-centred care, this lecture will address the perspective of the patient as *person*, who in their experience of care may be lonely or isolated, and how the systems of care may contribute to this. Delving specifically into seniors care and the experience of those suffering or alone due to illness or dementia, this lecture will draw from the lecturer's experience in the provision of mental health and spiritual health as a wellspring of strength and connectedness.

The lecture will also reflect theologically on relationships, both human and divine. Spirituality is situated in an open and diverse understanding, as are the founding stories of Catholic healthcare, motivated by faith and belief in the dignity of every human person.