

Julian Smith *reflects on*
Romans 14:1-12

A strange assortment of people



In these days of food fads and lose-weight-quickly diets it may be hard to understand why Roman Christians are so vexed about eating meat. The issue is clear and simple – is it right to eat anything sacrificed to an idol? Such meat is regularly on sale but with no provenance to guide them, how are Christians to know from where it has come? Some believe eating sacrificed meat makes no difference to their faith; others are not so sure and abstain from eating any meat. The issue becomes polarised and judgements are made about people and their faith – some are strong in faith, others weak. Being judgemental leads to division and this is where Paul steps in. He reminds the Romans of God's love and welcome for all who follow the way of Christ. They are called to rejoice in the variety of those whom God calls, not to judge one another. Life would be much easier if they could agree one course of action, right or wrong, but they can't, so fear takes over and positions harden.

Perhaps it is part of human nature to be suspicious and fearful of those who are different from us, but it is not God's way, for God loves indiscriminately and lavishly. God also calls a strange assortment of people – something that becomes clear every time we look in a mirror. 🍵

Lord God, you call a strange assortment of people to seek you by following your Son. Help us to celebrate the richness and variety of your creation and call, and to put fear and suspicion behind us. Amen.

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

I've come to the conclusion that I need to get out a bit more. "God and the smallholding" seems too confined these days, for where God needs to surprise us, so I've taken a very part-time job in the office of a very tiny repair garage just three miles away. If God is in the sheep and all that farming stuff, is God also in the grease and brokenness of the garage? The answer has to

be yes! but it seems too easy to be a person of faith in the rural places and to forget to be taken by surprise elsewhere. So God is in the grease that smooths hard surfaces, in the banter between colleagues, in the physicality of bashing metal and the fine dexterity of fitting tiny engine parts. It's another world for me – exciting, puzzling and full of possibilities.

"Morning God – what needs fixing today?" 🍵

Creation Season

Part 3 – made in the image of the Creator

by Alan Jefferies

In Genesis (1:26) we read that God said: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness." To be made in the image of God is to share, in some small way, in God's creativity.

During Creationtide the Church of England encourages Christians to engage in worship, prayer and action to recognise this calling to sustain, tend and serve creation. We are not separate from the world, but part of it – creatures formed from dust, shaped by the

breath of God. Our calling is to tend and keep the garden, not to dominate it. Creationtide invites us to revisit and revive our vocation. Whether we plant a seed, repair what is broken or campaign for climate justice, we act in imitation of the Creator. Put to good use, our creative power serves creation rather than consuming it.

Is there anything you can do, as an individual or a church community, to mark Creationtide this year?

www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/season-creation 🍵

“The man who has made God his dwelling place will always have a safe habitation.”

A. W. Tozer (1897-1963), pastor and author