

From the Chaplain...

The principle of uniformity exercises a powerful hold over the human mind. Within the Christian Church, there has long been an urge to formulate standards of belief and practice that will apply universally to all believers. There are, of course, good reasons for any community to seek out a certain level of coherence, to find ways to ensure that those in the group remain united and mutually accountable. Yet as our reading this Sunday from the Letter to the Romans reminds us (14. 1-12), the desire for conformity has always sat in tension with God's apparent appetite for diversity. Not for the first time, we find St Paul encouraging members of the early Church to set aside small differences and to cultivate an attitude of tolerance and humility in relating to others. He is eager that Christians should not revert to the rigid framework of the Jewish Law but instead allow for the possibility that the expression of faithfulness may assume a variety of forms. What finally matters, then, is not external compliance but an authentic and sustainable practice reflecting God's call to the individual. Going hand in hand with this is Paul's insistence that believers must not presume to judge those whose choices and habits deviate from their own. Where there are sincere differences of understanding, only God can assess the ultimate validity of each person's words and deeds. So Paul concludes that 'each of us shall give account of himself to God' (v.14). This is a lesson that all of us in the Church would do well to remember when we are tempted to assume that our own form of Christian practice is self-evidently superior.

News of the death of our area bishop, the Rt Revd Karowei Dorgu, came as a great sadness to us all when it was announced last weekend: see <https://southwark.anglican.org/>. Please continue to keep Bishop Karowei in your prayers, as well as his wife Mosun and their adult children Timi and Collette. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

At this Sunday's Choral Eucharist, we will welcome returning members of the Chapel Choir back into our midst after the summer break. We will also recognise new choral scholars and volunteer choristers as they join our community. The Revd Dr Susan Blackall will preside and has kindly agreed to read aloud a sermon that I have prepared for the service. In the meantime, please rest assured that all of you remain very much in my thoughts and prayers during my continuing absence from the Chapel.

Yours faithfully,
Robert

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