



ELY CATHEDRAL

# Weekly Reflection by Canon Jessica Martin

**5 January 2021**

*'...As the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.'*

My response to the news of the third lockdown was to spend more money than was quite sensible on ordering seeds online. More or less straight after watching the Prime Minister's announcement, there I was, gazing hungrily at pictures of heartsease, Greek basil, bright marigolds – as if I could bring the spring, jump the crisis, just by looking.

During the days of holiday after the Christmas services, I spent time in the garden, slashing at the gooseberry bushes (they slashed right back), clearing drifts of leaves – trying to spy, in the sodden and drab landscape in front of me, some sign of the bulbs I planted; of life, growth, change. There wasn't much to see: just the small deep-green spikes of the snowdrops beginning to show. But there are going to be lots of snowdrops.

Isaiah's words about God's actions in the world being like a springing garden are said every day in the Christmas season, Christmas being a season of new life and beginnings. Today, at Morning Prayer, they came both as a reading to hear and as a kind of prayer to say together. And because I am thinking about gardens as a refuge from the danger and suffering of our public situation, I found myself thinking about the comparison.

How do things in the garden spring up? You don't see any change, and it looks as if nothing is alive at all – and then - you do. Small signs, first, in a landscape which looks dreary, exhausted, spent. The gold of aconites, witch-hazel. An unexpected scent of daphne or viburnum. And always the spikes of bulbs hinting at the buried energy working away unseen; buds on trees and bushes and hedges. All saying that winter will not last for ever.

Righteousness – being oriented towards the good and acting in accordance with it, simply for goodness's own sake – and praise, which delights in all that is good - seem to have been under-honoured recently. But there's actually an awful lot of righteousness and praise about. An awful lot of people doing what is right even though it involves yet more endurance, yet more patience, in a time which has been dominated by the demands of endurance, the pains of patience. An awful lot of people working every hour God sends to save lives under testing circumstances. Words of praise and appreciation still appearing in windows of shops, stores, houses. Small unremarked acts of kindness, neighbour to neighbour, family to family, person to person.

All these are pressed into being by the conditions of this pandemic – the suffering and confusion and loss which comes with it. We are still in winter.

But the spring will come, and love will flower. And the righteousness and praise which is growing strongly and invisibly now, will spring up - somehow, in some form - before the nations.