Dear children,

Before I became a Bishop, I was a vicar of a church, and we had our own little things that became traditions. I loved our Easter Garden. I’m sure you have seen one. They are little versions of the scene around the tomb where Jesus’ body was placed after he died and where some of his disciples first met him after he came back to life. Everyone brought in things to go in it; a plant pot covered in moss for the tomb and flowers from someone’s garden.

One family decided they wanted to bring in some chicks (not real ones!) to complete the scene and while they are not strictly in the Easter story, they did seem very ‘Easterly’ – until you saw them in the garden. They were huge, much bigger than anything else, even the tomb! They looked like yellow, fluffy monsters ready to eat anyone who tried to visit. But we loved them, and they came out year after year. As well as massive birds, that Easter Garden was full of hope. Easter is a story that is full of a special kind of hope, and all the gardens remind us of that.

I live right in the middle of London, and we don’t have much of a garden – I wonder whether you have one, or some grass or maybe a balcony with pots? You will still know the story that gardens tell, because it happens in the park you walk past on the way home from school, or in the planters on your school playground.
Each year, we see the plants die back as autumn turns to winter and the cold arrives. But we know that no matter how long the winter seems to be, or however cold and dark it gets, spring is coming. To start with it’s just hope – like a sunny morning so cold you can slide on ice – but then we start to see signs. It’s getting lighter in the mornings, maybe we see some flowers poking up in the park, and we know: soon the garden is going to be full of life again.

That first Easter Garden must have felt very dark to Jesus’ friends. He had been killed by the Romans and now His body, that they had come to care for, had gone; they did not know what to do. Suddenly, they met Jesus in the Garden! He was alive; that same garden must have seemed full of life and love. For them, nothing would ever be the same; Jesus would be always with them and they would always have a special hope.

‘Hope’ is a funny word; we often use it to describe things that would be nice to happen but probably won’t. For example, “I hope I can keep my bedroom tidy!”

When Christians say ‘hope’ we mean something we have confidence in; just like we hope that spring will come, and I know it will. At Easter, we remember that when Jesus came back to life our world was given hope, that no matter how dark or scary the world got, Jesus was always with us.

I know that right now the world feels very dark and scary. I pray for you this Easter time, that you would know God’s love and His hope, so that you know that Jesus is with us and that we are always loved.

Bishop Sarah