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Charity really does begin at home

As I write, a low sun is shining through my window, apparently shining in a "summer blue" sky. But this is an illusion, for it is now deep winter.

But take heart, for every day when the weather is clear, the midday sun climbs a little higher in the sky. So, at least there is some hope - hope that spring is not too far distant.

To be bereft of hope is, to be sure, to be in a state of despair, the result not only of our fickle weather but also of the stresses of our human lives.

We all ought to deserve hope - hope for ourselves, our family and our friends, hope that, in the end, things - whatever these things may be - will turn out "all right".

Sadly, many in the Third World, living beyond the confines of our own consumer-driven society, feel bereft of hope of any sort. Yet the whole world is God's creation.

Many of you will recall the hymn "All Things Bright and Beautiful". Although this hymn is intended to be a happy celebration of God's creation, the lyrics - written in the 19th century - are clearly selective. They fail to mention a world, though pretty and charming, with no reference to our "real" world. We are all aware that many aspects of creation are not at all "beautiful" - the effects of war and poverty, for example.

Our multi-channel televisions address these less pleasant aspects of creation extremely efficiently. Who can fail to be moved by scenes of human anguish, brought as they are into the midst of our living rooms? Such scenes not only figure in the news from distant lands of which we know nothing, but also figure in the here and now.

Who would have thought that food banks, clothing banks and the blight of homelessness would be a growing feature of like in Britain today? Maybe they illustrate the truth of something that we've know all along - that charity, and with it hope, do begin at home.