



**St James's  
Church  
Piccadilly**

**Aftermath 13th February 2022**

*Aftermath is a collaborative community project that has been running for the past year.*

In October 1940, St James's was hit by high explosive and incendiary bombs. 42 species of plants grew in the ruins. Some of these plants were sown again in the 'bomb box', a micro-environment in the courtyard on Palm Sunday 2021. As we move through our current COVID-19 aftermath we have been asking what these weedy plants can teach us about our perceptions, assumptions and hierarchies, and discovering their many virtues.



As we emerge from our own pandemic disaster, we give thanks for the wild plants which sprouted in the ruined nave of our church after it was bombed during the Second World War.

*Help us, when we are travelling through harrowing and difficult times, to look for signs of new hope and growth.*

These plants were classed as weeds, but each of them offered unexpected gifts: food, drink, healing, and the ability to restore desecrated soil.

*Help us to rejoice in all of God's Creation, and to be ready to receive blessings from life-forms we may have disregarded.*

These were pioneer plants, sprouting and spreading in ravaged soil: patient, resilient, friends of unfriendly spaces.

*As we strive to create God's kingdom here on earth, teach us patience, persistence and the boldness to challenge ideas and institutions which seem long-established and hostile.*

We noticed the unpredictability of these wild plants, arriving unsought and travelling in seed form through long wind-blown distances.

*Help us to shed the human compulsion to control and to be open to a future that may not fit our expectations.*

Contemplating the classification of these plants as 'weeds' made us challenge the marginalisation of the alien and the 'queer' in human society.

*Help us to honour difference so that we may build a creative and just society which invites all to participate.*

We realised that humankind has driven itself to the brink of disaster by suppressing wildness.

*After seeing ourselves as separate for so long, we pray that we may recognise our kinship with the other-than-human lives around us. Help us to enter into a new relationship with the rich and diverse life-forms that share our planet.*

Please look up Kate Rigby's inspiring reflection on our project as part of her own academic work

<https://www.environmentandsociety.org/arcadia/praise-weeds-symposium-st-james-piccadilly>