

Friends

It has been a noisy week here at the manse, with many of our neighbours following the Hindu or Sikh faiths and setting off fireworks to mark Diwali. Although this is not a Christian festival, Diwali celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance – themes which radiate through our own scriptures.

Next week there will be more fireworks, as we mark Guy Fawkes/Bonfire night. Although the days when keenly creative youngsters would make a “guy” and wheel him around the town on an old pram chassis, asking “Penny for the Guy”, still there is something rather lovely about bonfires, fireworks, soup, sausages and cinder toffee.

In my previous appointment, one of the churches used to have a bonfire service, much beloved by our Brownies and drawing back many families who had moved out or lost the church habit after growing out of Sunday School. It was a fun, family event usually held around 4:30 when it had got dark. My first Church Council as a probationer, there had been a long and heated conversation about what to do with old, heavy, wooden trestle tables that they had been trying to get rid of for decades and then a conversation about needing wood for the bonfire. Suggesting that the bonfire and the trestle tables might solve each other’s problems is still one of my brighter (pun intended) suggestions at Church Council!

In these days, as the nights draw in, we become increasingly aware of the need for light. For us, it’s an easy thing to press a switch and have the lights come on, but in the time of Jesus, light was harder to come by. The fireworks and bonfires of Guy Fawkes remind us of a time in British history when a plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament failed, a time when the light shone in the darkness and

the darkness did not overcome it. Last week, during the "In Loving Memory" service, we lit candles to remember those who had gone before us into glory, holding to the faith that they have passed over into the light of Christ. As we light our sparklers this coming week, let us think of ways in which we can light candles of hope and joy so that the night-time wraps us round with comfort, security and trust.

God bless, Vicci