

Friends

During Covid there were very few blessings. However, for me, one of them was the invitation to regular Zoom calls with a group of girls with whom I had been at boarding school in the early 80's. The end of Covid meant that we zoomed less, but two of our number work abroad and when they come to the UK, we all get together for a bit of a celebratory chin-wag. And we tell stories. One of my friends has this wonderful thing she does where if someone arrives in the middle of someone telling a story, and we all get up and say "Hello" and hug etc, when the newcomer has sat down she says (for example) "Vicci was just telling us a story about... Go on Vicci, what happened next?" It's a very affirming way of being.

I was thinking about this today because of the stories that we are currently exploring in the Cookham Rise Bible Study on the Women in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus. We have an extraordinary story to tell in the story of the birth of Jesus, and the rest - wonderful, marvellous stories. It occurred to me today that for the first time in hundreds of years in this country, these stories are not known. Sometimes they are not known well, sometimes they are not known at all. I was at some training for delivery of specialist R.E. in schools the other week and discovered that schools really want us to tell it as we see it, to say "I am a Christian and this is what we believe." To do that sensitively, recognising that other people believe other things, but to give an authentic account of our faith. It amuses me somewhat that I am now a Kitemarked deliverer of the Christian account in schools, but I have the confidence to know what they want and am now on the specialist website as someone who is trained to deliver it. What they want to hear are the stories of our faith.

Are you a storyteller I wonder? If you are, this is a good time to be telling the Christian story. It saddens me when good Christians say "Yes, well, it's not all about this shopping and eating excess you know," without saying what it is about. All those twinkling lights are there because "the light shone in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." All those gifts

are there to remember that farm workers and foreigners both came and gave what they could, and so can we.

Enjoy Advent and all the stories it has to offer.

God bless, Vicci