

Sturdy Indefensibles

My old copy of Joy of Cooking has a rolled cookie recipe. It was my go-to recipe for years when we made and decorated Christmas cookies. They were a lot of fun to do but they didn't taste too wonderful. The authors of the cookbook called them 'sturdy indefensibles'. I love this phrase. I think much of what we do around Christmas involves sturdy indefensibles. The Christmas story has been told and retold for many purposes and many audiences for 2000 years. We, UU's, know that it is not history, is not literally true, that it contradicts itself. And yet, it has given rise to a million customs and traditions, many of them not very closely related to the original story. Yet, at the heart of all of them are stories of generosity, of giving, of care for the vulnerable, sometimes by those who have little themselves. It is a story of kindness and love in unexpected places. As much as my cookies, it is a sturdy indefensible. We all know the story. When most of the subject people in the world were praying for the birth of a warrior, or a wise person to lead them to liberation from the most powerful empire the world had ever known, instead a helpless baby is born in a barn to a poor couple. And who first knows about him? He is first revealed to shepherds, the poorest of the poor themselves. What a twist! Where is the mighty hero? Where is the sage? Who shall save the people?

A baby cries in the night, and suddenly we find in our own hearts the courage to be heroes, we discover the wisdom of sages. We rush to protect the baby and, as we do, we find the strength to begin the world anew. Babies, all babies, give us the gifts of compassion and hope. They give us a reason to have a tomorrow.

Let me begin this day of readings with this story.

