

FIRST

serving and proclaiming

2014 / Volume 1 / Issue 2

Christmas

12 DAYS OF
CHRISTMAS

OR IS IT TIME FOR A BREAK?

JOIN US IN JANUARY

UPCOMING EVENTS THAT
NEED YOU!

a seasonal publication of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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Christmas 2014

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FROM THE PULPIT

by the Rev. Andrew D. Downs, Rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

ISN'T NOW A TIME FOR A BREAK?

I read recently that we may be singing the "12 Days of Christmas" all wrong. Something to do with that funny fifth day.

Many of us learned it as

"On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me: five golden rings."

Others learned it as "five gold rings."

Since Miss Piggy chose "five gold rings" for The Muppets' version of the song, I'll go with her.

A new reading pointed out that other than the fifth day, the first seven days are all birds and the last five are people. The author suggests that somewhere along the line perhaps the fifth day was changed from a bird to a ring.

Perhaps they used to fight over whether or not to sing five gold/golden *wrens*.

Either way, we rarely get to the fifth day of Christmas and still feel like it's Christmas. We're usually planning our New Year's parties and have visited with all the people we plan on seeing for

Christmas. In fact, all that preparation we did during Advent feels really heavy right about now.

Kids are out of school. Clergy often take time off. It really feels like a winter break. What it doesn't feel like, and at least for me it has never felt like, is Christmas. Or like more Christmas extended.

This year, I did struggle with getting everything done. As it is, this is going to press Christmas Eve afternoon. I have about an hour to finish some shopping and get everything ready for tonight. This isn't the mellow character of Advent I read about and preach about. And it certainly feels like I need the break.

What if I took the song more literally. Not so much as to buy my spouse some birds and dancers. But to celebrate for 12 days with intention. What if we mark each day until January 5 as GOD's special gift to us? I think we'd actually feel better. Just a hunch.

Peace to you and Merry Christmas!

The Rev. Drew Downs

THE BIBLICAL WILD

The Biblical Wild is an interactive bible study for individuals, small groups, neighborhoods, and congregations where we will journey into the wilds of Holy Scripture through daily readings of the Old Testament and Psalms and weekly video reflections presented by **the Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley**, Bishop of the **Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan**.



Small groups meet on Sundays at 9 and Thursdays at 5:30

Visit the website at **thebiblicalwild.org**!

JOIN US IN JANUARY

Epiphany Service

One of the principal feasts of the year, and one of the church's oldest, Epiphany is celebrated every year on **January 6th**. Join us Friday, the 6th in the chapel at 7:00 pm for this important feast.

Formation Forum

Join us Sunday, **January 11** after the 10:00 service for a special forum on formation and Christian education. This is an opportunity for St. Stephen's to gather to discuss and ultimately guide the direction of our formation and education programs for the year.

Theology on Tap

Want to gather with others to talk about religion without feeling like you are the only one who doesn't get it? Or in a place that is more comfortable for real conversation? Watch for a time and location, TBD!

Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting will be Sunday, **January 25th** after the 10:00 service!

Giving Thanks

And remember to give thanks for the amazing 2014 we had and for all the amazing work ahead of us in 2015!