



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

ELECTION OF NEW RECTOR

The Wardens and Vestry of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Terre Haute, announce the election and appointment of The Rev. Andrew Downs of St. Clair, Michigan, as the parish's new rector. Rev. Downs will assume his duties on October 1 and lead his first Sunday services here on October 5. The date for a Celebration of a New Ministry service will be announced later in the fall.

Rev. Downs, who is known as Drew, currently is the Rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, St. Clair, in the Diocese of Eastern Michigan and has served that parish since February 2012. He earned the Master of Divinity degree at Huron University College in London, Ontario in 2007. He also earned the B.A. from Alma College in Alma, Michigan where his liberal arts curriculum majored in English and had a minor in sociology. He also did graduate work at Emerson College in Boston. He was ordained as a priest in the Diocese of Eastern Michigan in 2008.

In his submission to the search committee, Drew wrote:

St. Stephen's seems to be in the best possible spot: a worship space that ties the community to its past and evokes the ancient practices of the church; St. Stephen's is in the middle of a ripe mission field; St. Stephen's is aware of the need to not only learn the gospel, but that it involves living it today. And perhaps most importantly, turning their attention to where that living may take them tomorrow.

Rev. Downs, 36, has been married to Rose since May 2005 and they have two children: Sophia, age 6, and Isaiah, age 3. The search committee was highly impressed by Drew's energy and interest and took special note of his persistent use of 21st century technology. Parishioners may be interested in visiting Drew's website—www.drewdowns.net—to read samples of his writings and sermons. In making the search committee's unanimous recommendation to the Vestry, co-chair Bill Allen read another excerpt of Drew's submission: "I can honestly picture myself doing the work of Christ with St. Stephen's. St. Stephen's is not a generic Episcopal church. And I am not a generic priest. If they are looking build something awesome and they want to build that awesome thing with me, I'd be glad to give it a try."

The search committee highlighted these impressions of Drew from their interviews with him:

- * Enthusiastic and energizing
- * Well versed in using social media in contemporary ministry
- * Personable, genuine and caring pastoral communicator
- * Liturgically blends traditional practices with flexibility and creativity
- * Strong sense of family and care for children
- * Sermons filled with enthusiasm which speaks of the Holy Spirit in the 21st century
- * Collaborative team builder of parish talents and for community involvement.

The Vestry unanimously accepted the search committee's recommendation and extended the call to Drew on August 4.

The Senior Warden and Vestry will form a transition team of parish members to support the Downs family in their move to Terre Haute. Both Drew and Rose are Michigan natives. Since graduation from seminary, Drew has served churches in Saginaw and Lansing, Michigan, and also served as an assistant rector at St. Paul's in Newnan, Georgia. For those wishing to send messages of welcome to Drew, Rose, Sophia, and Isaiah, you may use this email address: adowns@gmail.com or use this current mailing address: 6562 Rattle Run, St. Clair, MI 48079.

The Wardens and Vestry congratulate and extend deepest thanks to the members of the search committee who have worked with evident diligence and patience over the last 18 months. The successful conclusion of the search is cause for great celebration and expressions of gratitude. Members of the parish are encouraged to express their personal appreciation.

We are grateful also for the faithful service and leadership of The Rev. Mary Slenski during her interim pastorate among us. St. Stephen's has grown and strengthened in that time owing to her pastoral gifts and wisdom. Also, we acknowledge with gratitude the support of our Bishop, Cate Waynick, and the Diocese of Indianapolis, especially for the ministry and support from Canon Debra Kissinger and diocesan "coach" Meribeth Kussmaul, both of whom worked regularly with the search committee throughout the process.