

The season of Christmas

Do you know the song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas"? Tom Goetz, Presbyterian missionary, interviewed Sally Nakai Kobayashi, a teacher at the Hokusei University Chapel, Japan. She explained the meaning behind the song. She reminds us that there are actually twelve days of Christmas, the days between Christmas Day and Epiphany, January 6th. The song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" was written in England as a secret way for Catholic children to learn about the Christian faith during prohibition. The gifts in the song have hidden meanings about faith. The "true love" in the song is not an earthly suitor. "True love" refers to God. The "me" who receives the presents refers to every baptized person. Each day conveys an important Christian belief.

1. The "partridge in a pear tree" is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
2. Two turtle doves refer to the Bible's Old and New Testaments.
3. Three French hens indicate faith, hope and charity, the three theological virtues found in I Corinthians 13:13.
4. Four calling birds alludes to the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
5. Five golden rings refer to the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch.
6. Six geese a laying calls to mind the six days of creation described in Genesis 1.
7. Seven swans a-swimming are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit detailed in Romans 12.
8. Eight maids a-milking refer to the eight beatitudes.
9. Nine ladies dancing alludes to the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22)
10. Ten lords a-leaping refers to the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17).
11. Eleven pipers piping refers to the 11 faithful apostles.
12. And finally, the 12 drummers drumming refers to 12 points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/letter/12-days-christmas/>

I hope that you enjoy each of the twelve days of Christmas and that this blueprint of the Christian faith enhances your enjoyment of the Christmas season.

Please use our devotion as part of your Advent spiritual practice this year. Our devotion is *Attending to Advent: prose, poetry and prayer* by Terri McDowell Ott of the Presbyterian Outlook. Rev. Ott invites us into the season of advent: "Advent leads us into a time of expectant waiting, a time when our faith can find a foothold despite our unsteady world."

Our devotion ends on Christmas Eve with this prayer: *What joy, what hope emerges from a mother's womb tonight! We praise you, God of glory, for the immensity of Christ. We praise you for this child's life-saving birth, for the One who comes to set us free from prisons of our own making. We praise you for daring to dwell with us, weak and vulnerable as a newborn, yet threatening to every power-drunk king. Our souls magnify you on this Christmas Eve. We wonder at your love. Amen.*

We will celebrate worship on Christmas Day with a Cantata for choir and congregation. This musical composition includes Scripture, hymns and readings that celebrate Christ's birth. Our time together will conclude with sharing of a birthday cake for the baby Jesus.

Wishing you a holy Christmas, Pastor Cindy