

## LISTENING ALONGSIDE



## ECHOING CHRIST

### **Lenten Devotions 2017**

**Friday,  
March 31, 2017**

By Linda Davis

God speaks in many different ways. I heard God speak in late 1999 in what I would have previously considered a preposterous way.

I had an occasional Friday afternoon off from my job in a doctor's office. That particular October afternoon, shortly after Hurricane Floyd, I was lying on the couch, half napping with the television on. *The Maury Povich Show* came on. This type of TV show is not my cup of tea, but I was too lazy and half asleep to change the channel. The subject of the show that day was the need for adoption of older children. I became interested and watched the heartbreaking tales of adolescents and teenagers who had been in foster care for years and yearned for a permanent family. When my husband came home from work shortly after the show was over, I informed him that I thought God had told me we were supposed to adopt a child. Surprisingly, he only called me crazy once or twice before believing this was indeed a word from God. Surprisingly, by the following June, we had been approved to adopt Cindy, and she moved in with us in July. Her biological brother Adam came into our family that October.

It's been a journey with many ups and downs, but we never doubted this decision. Most of you know that Cindy's children live with us now as Cindy works on finding her way. We are grateful for the support of Lakeside and other faith communities who pray for us and love our children. Our family's lives would not be as rich, as fun, or as fulfilling if I hadn't listened to God's clear voice coming from an unexpected place that October afternoon 17 years ago.

## Prayer

God of surprises, we are so often looking for you in all the wrong places. We think we will find you in Jerusalem: in places of self-importance; in places of power, wisdom and might; in places of privilege; in places where everybody expects to find you.

But then you surprise us. Not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem is where we will find you. Not in a palace but on dusty roads in small villages is where we will find you. Not among the powerful but among the lowly is where we will find you. We discover we will find you off the beaten track. We discover that we will find you in the little places; in the unimpressive places; in the backwoods places; in the forgotten places; in the poor, vulnerable, and despised places. Lead us, Lord, to your presence.

Like the Wisemen, may we follow the star to the unexpected places. Like your first disciples, may we be willing to leave behind what is familiar to follow you to unexpected places. Give us the humility to confess that we have been searching for you in all the wrong places. May we follow you to the places in our own city where no one would ever look for you—and discover overwhelming joy. Lead us, Lord, to your presence.

Draw the leaders of this world to the unexpected places. Turn their attention to the places of pain and suffering. Give them the wisdom to listen to the voices of people who don't have power and influence. Inspire them to confess they have been searching for the answers in the wrong places. Lead us, Lord, to your presence.

—Adapted from the liturgy of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church,  
Cincinnati, OH

### Genesis 32:22-32

The same night Jacob got up and . . . crossed the ford of the Jabbok. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have wrestled with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

### John 14:15-17

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.