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## God's song

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.B.

The birds were elsewhere. It was late afternoon at the Faraway Ranch in the Chiricahua National Monument in Arizona. This historic property nestles near the entrance to the park with a dry wash "running" nearby. Our group walked a path beside the wash, hoping to see woodpeckers. We'd already seen a male and female Arizona woodpecker, quite a rarity for someone from the Eastern United States.

I spotted a mule deer silently grazing in the woods. The group stopped. The deer stared. Soon we all went about our business. She to her eating. And we to our walking.

There were so few birds that people in the group started chatting and the leader headed for the bus at a long-legged pace. Several of us with shorter legs were trailing behind when I heard a chip-chip. Instantly I stopped and looked about. A pair of women behind me walked past. But my husband and another man came back to see why I'd stopped. The chipping continued sporadically, enough to home in on a brown creeper working his way up the trunk of a nearby tree.

Brown creepers look like a piece of tree bark, moving. They have little white flecks on their chocolate-brown backs, giving them the look of mottled bark. It was a first for all three of us, and we silently enjoyed the show for a few minutes before walking on to join the group.

It turned out the leader and several of the others, now watching a red-napped sapsucker (a locally prevalent woodpecker), were disappointed they hadn't slowed their pace to find the brown creeper. One woman vowed to come back with her husband, now that she knew where to locate one.

Later, on the bus, several birders who were more experienced wanted to know how I'd spotted the bird. It wasn't difficult because I was being quiet, listening, and willing to work to connect the sound with its source.

I realized this was a metaphor for spiritual healing. How do we connect with God's messages that heal us? We need to be quiet, listen, and take the time to connect the spiritual ideas that come to us with their source, God.

To be quiet mentally the Bible recommends, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). Constant worrying, talking about problems, wrestling with options are the antithesis of prayer and mental quietness.

Jesus told his disciples, "When you pray, go into your inner room, close your door..." (Matt. 6:6, New American Standard Bible). A theologian from the 19th century, Mary Baker Eddy, explained that passage: "We must close the lips and silence the material senses" ("Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," page 15).

Once the mental chatter stops, we're ready to really listen for God's thoughts. Even if we're not certain what to listen for (I didn't know what a brown creeper sounded like), we're sure to hear God's messages. I've found that thoughts from God, divine Love, are good, nonjudgmental, compassionate, and comforting.

To identify God's thoughts, first you might read inspired messages that others have recorded from God. These messages are in the Bible and a companion guidebook, Science and Health. Then you listen for similar kinds of thoughts until you can begin to recognize God's thoughts directly.

During the weekend of the birding trip, I was feeling emotionally wiped out. A personal relationship had hit a wall. I'd prayed. I'd talked to the person. I tried to forgive and forget. None of this was working for me.

Before leaving on our trip, I tried to resolve the difficulty. The conversation deteriorated until I decided God *must* have some words that

would communicate properly. I tried to quiet frustration and hopelessness, so I could listen for God's words. Soon a whole new approach occurred to me. The other person grasped the problem, and I could let it go. When we resumed working together the next week, the wall had disappeared, and a new level of cooperation and action appeared.

Like finding birds, sometimes God's answers are obvious. Sometimes we have to persevere. But being quiet, listening, and discerning God's answer is always comforting and healing.