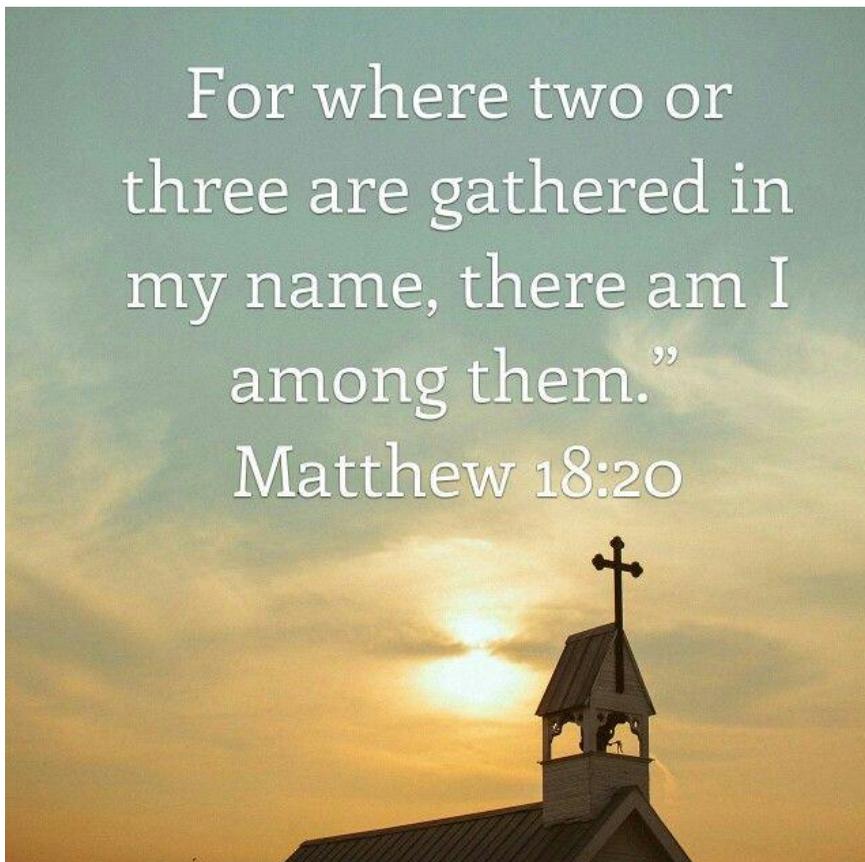


***The Lutheran Church of the Covenant***  
***“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”***

For where two or  
three are gathered in  
my name, there am I  
among them.”  
Matthew 18:20



*Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost*  
*September 6, 2020*



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

## Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

*Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.*

Prelude *At the Table* (GIBSON)

Confession & Forgiveness

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as we take time to recognize our shortcomings, while also remembering God's relentless grace.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
whose steadfast love is everlasting,  
whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

**Amen!**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Reconciling God,  
we confess that we do not trust your abundance,  
and we deny your presence in our lives.  
We place our hope in ourselves  
and rely on our own efforts.  
We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.  
We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.  
We fear difference and do not welcome others  
as you have welcomed us.  
We sin in thought, word, and deed.  
By your grace, forgive us;  
through your love, renew us;  
and, as the Holy Spirit, lead us;  
so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen!

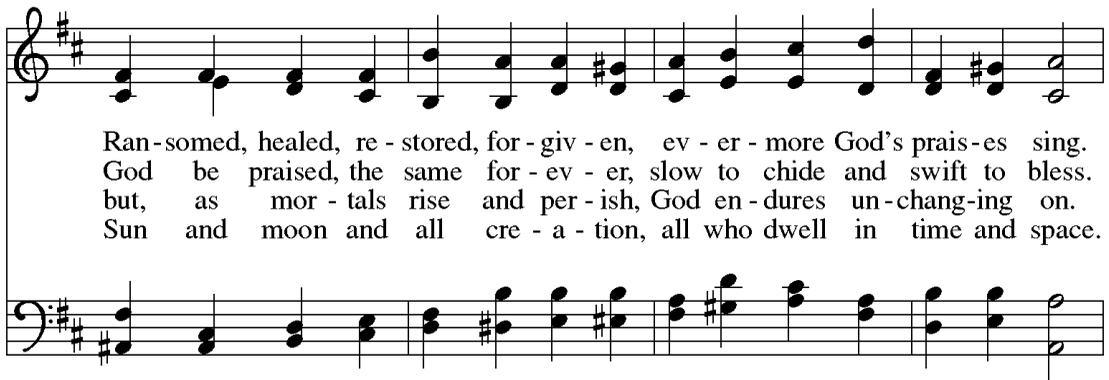
Beloved of God,  
by the radical abundance of divine mercy  
we have peace with God through † Christ Jesus,  
through whom we have obtained grace upon grace.  
Our sins are forgiven.  
Let us live now in hope.  
For hope does not disappoint,  
because God's love has been poured into our hearts  
through the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen!**

Gathering Hymn *Praise, My Soul, the God of Heaven*

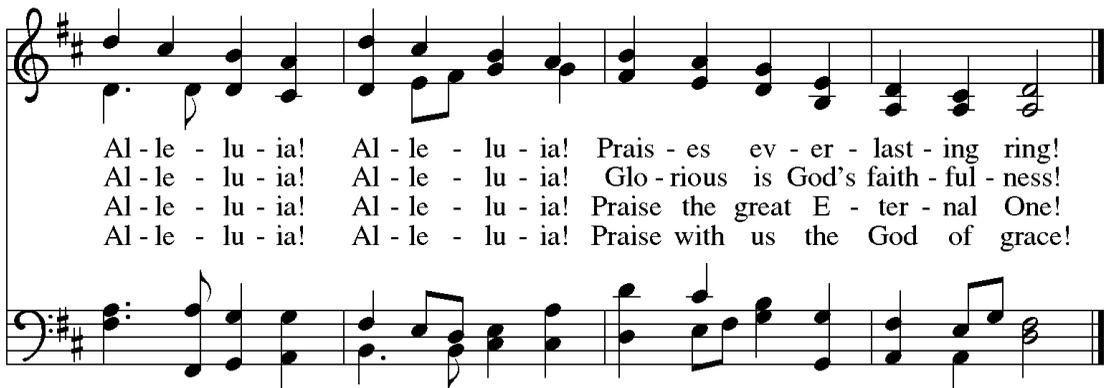
#864



1 Praise, my soul, the God of heav - en; joy - ful - ly your trib-ute bring.  
 2 God be praised for grace and fa - vor to our fore-bears in dis-tress.  
 3 Frail as sum-mer's flow'r we flour - ish, blows the wind and it is gone;  
 4 An - gels sing in ad - o - ra - tion, in God's pres-ence, face to face.



Ran-somed, healed, re - stored, for - giv - en, ev - er - more God's prais-es sing.  
 God be praised, the same for - ev - er, slow to chide and swift to bless.  
 but, as mor - tals rise and per - ish, God en - dures un - chang - ing on.  
 Sun and moon and all cre - a - tion, all who dwell in time and space.



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Prais - es ev - er - last - ing ring!  
 Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Glo - rious is God's faith - ful - ness!  
 Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Praise the great E - ter - nal One!  
 Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Praise with us the God of grace!

## Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen!**

## First Lesson

Ezekiel 33:7-11

*God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.*

<sup>7</sup>So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, “O wicked ones, you shall surely die,” and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup>But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

<sup>10</sup>Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: “Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?” <sup>11</sup>Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

The word of the Lord!

**Thanks be to God!**

## Psalm

Psalm 119:33-40

<sup>33</sup>Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,  
and I shall keep it to the end.

<sup>34</sup>**Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching;  
I shall keep it with all my heart.**

<sup>35</sup>Lead me in the path of your commandments,  
for that is my desire.

<sup>36</sup>**Incline my heart to your decrees  
and not to unjust gain.**

<sup>37</sup>Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood;  
give me life in your way.

<sup>38</sup>**Fulfill your promise to your servant,  
which is for those who fear you.**

<sup>39</sup>Turn away the reproach that I dread,  
because your judgments are good.

<sup>40</sup>**Behold, I long for your commandments;  
by your righteousness enliven me.**

Second Lesson

Romans 13:8-14

*The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.*

<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The word of the Lord!

**Thanks be to God!**

Gospel

Matthew 18:15-20

*Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>15</sup>“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to

listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

**Praise to you, O Christ!**

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Will You Let Me Be Your Servant*

#659



1 Will you let me be your ser - vant, let me be as  
 2 We are pil - grims on a jour - ney, we are trav - 'lers  
 3 I will hold the Christ - light for you in the night - time  
 4 I will weep when you are weep - ing; when you laugh I'll  
 5 Will you let me be your ser - vant, let me be as



Christ to you? Pray that I may have the grace to  
 on the road; we are here to help each oth - er  
 laugh with you. I will hold my hand out to you,  
 Christ to you? Pray that I may have the grace to  
 laugh with you. I will share your joy and sor - row



let you be my ser - vant, too.  
 walk the mile and bear the load.  
 speak the peace you long to hear.  
 till we've seen this jour - ney through.  
 let you be my ser - vant, too.

Text: Richard Gillard, b. 1953

Music: THE SERVANT SONG, Richard Gillard

Text and music © 1977 Scripture In Song (c/o Integrity's Hosanna Music)/ASCAP,  
 c/o Integrity Media, Inc., 1000 Coady Road, Mobile AL 36695.

## Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**  
**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**  
**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

Drawn together by the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need, responding to each petition with the words "Hear us and help us."

Unite your whole church, O God. Give to all your precious children the gifts of repentance and reconciliation. Strengthen ecumenical partnerships and interracial cooperation among the churches. Guide the work of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. O God, our true foundation, in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Protect your creation, O God. Teach us ways to live that do not harm what you have entrusted to our care. Give to all your creatures the habitat they need for life. Renew and enliven places suffering from drought, flood, storms, or pollution. O God, Creator of the earth, in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Turn nations and leaders from ways that lead to death, O God. Shape new paths toward peace and cooperation, teaching us to recognize one another as neighbors. Guide legislators and civil servants toward laws that protect the well-being of all. O God, Sovereign of the world, in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Sustain us in our work, O God, and give employment to those who need it. Shape societies to ensure fair treatment for all who labor. Help us to love our neighbors in and through our work. O God, Guardian of all peoples, in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

Tend to all in need, O God. Assist all friends and family members who are seeking restored relationships. Give community to the lonely and welcome to the outcast. Shelter all who are vulnerable in body, mind, or spirit. O God, Physician of the sick, in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in faith. As you equipped them, equip us with your protection and power, until with them we see your salvation. O God, Eternal One, in your mercy, **hear us and help us.**

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

### Thanksgiving at the Table

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts!

**We lift them to the Lord!**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!

**It is right to give our thanks and praise!**

Holy God,  
our Maker, Redeemer, and Healer,  
in the harmonious world of your creation,  
the plants and animals,  
the seas and stars  
were whole and well in your praise.

When sin had scarred the world,  
you sent your Son to heal our ills  
and to form us again into one.

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore,  
his acts of healing,  
his body given up,  
and his victory over death,  
we await that day when all the peoples of the earth  
will come to the river to enjoy the tree of life.

Holy Spirit, be immersed in this meal:  
as grains scattered on the hillside become one bread,  
so let your church be gathered from the ends of the earth,  
that all may be fed with the Bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,  
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,  
both now and forever. **Amen!**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

Communion

Music Interlude "*Bunessan*" (CALLAHAN)

*(please use this time to meditate or pray for those dear to your heart)*

Prayer after Communion

God of the welcome table,  
in this meal we have feasted on your goodness  
and have been united by your presence among us.  
Empower us to go forth sustained by these gifts  
so that we may share your neighborly love with all,  
through Jesus Christ, the giver of abundant life.  
**Amen!**

Blessing

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers,  
nor things present, nor things to come,  
nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.  
God, the creator, ✠ Jesus, the Christ,  
and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,  
bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen!**



- 1 Joy - ful, joy - ful we a - dore thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love!
- 2 All thy works with joy sur - round thee, earth and heav'n re - flect thy rays,
- 3 Thou art giv - ing and for - giv - ing, ev - er bless - ing, ev - er blest,



Hearts un - fold like flow'rs be - fore thee, prais - ing thee, their sun a - bove.  
stars and an - gels sing a - round thee, cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.  
well - spring of the joy of liv - ing, o - cean - depth of hap - py rest!



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, drive the gloom of doubt a - way.  
Field and for - est, vale and moun - tain, flow - 'ry mead - ow, flash - ing sea,  
Thou our Fa - ther, Christ our broth - er, all who live in love are thine;



Giv - er of im - mor - tal glad - ness, fill us with the light of day.  
chant - ing bird, and flow - ing foun - tain call us to re - joice in thee.  
teach us how to love each oth - er, lift us to the joy di - vine!

Text: Henry van Dyke, 1852–1922

Music: HYMN TO JOY, Ludwig van Beethoven, 1770–1827, adapt.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you!

**Thanks be to God!**

Postlude *Hymn to Joy* (KRAPF)

## Praying Together

**... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating:** Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Alexis Carr, Joan Clarke, Steve Dobush, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Alex Hohenstein, Judy Jones, Tom Juhasz, Ralph Kane, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Don Rusher Jr., Norm Schuette, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tim Susanek, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Linda Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family

### LAST WEEK

General Fund receipts for week ending 8/30/2020: \$1816

To the glory of God, and in loving memory of Pastor Stuenkel, a memorial offering was given by Jean Rusher.

To the glory of God, and in loving memory of George Lautanen, memorial offerings were given by Steve & Claudia Senderak, Arlene Lasher and Jean Rusher.

## *Lectionary Blog: Love Conquers Sin (Part 1)*



I don't know about you all, but I feel extremely uncomfortable pointing out when someone is sinning. I grew up on a steady diet of "mind the log in your own eye" and "God judges, not us." Those are good words to live by. I imagine we all know someone who is much too comfortable critiquing the behavior of others. But

sometimes our behavior is sin that hurts other people and offends God. When someone tells us we have hurt them, it's a gift and an opportunity to repent. This week's Scriptures make this point clearly.

In Ezekiel 33, God describes the responsibility of a watchman. If a watchman doesn't warn the people that a violent army is coming, the subsequent deaths of villagers is the watchman's responsibility. But if the watchman *does* warn the people and they choose to ignore him, they are responsible for their own deaths. God compares the prophet to this watchman. If God pronounces guilt on someone for wickedness and the prophet doesn't announce it so there's a chance for repentance, God will hold the prophet responsible for that person's death (Ezekiel 33:8). But the prophet is absolved of responsibility if he does give a warning and the person chooses to continue sinning.

As is frequently the case in Jesus' ministry, rather than undermining this rule from the Old Testament, he intensifies it.

The so-called "Matthew 18 rule" is well known but frequently inappropriately applied. The focus of Jesus' teaching wasn't about privacy or laying out rules for church discipline as much as it was demonstrating how his followers are to love neighbors who sin against them. This topic of loving others when they sin will be continued next week as well. For this week, the emphasis is on not letting sin that injures others continue, specifically for the sake of the perpetrator. The rule from Ezekiel is that a person must be warned about their wickedness once, but after that there is no more responsibility toward that person. Jesus intensifies our responsibility toward each other.

If we are hurting our sibling in Christ by sinning against her, Jesus calls for her (or, I would argue, a trusted representative, like a *go'el*, to prevent a victim from being revictimized) to rebuke us. If we choose to listen and repent, we have been won over. The Greek here, ἐκέρθησας, is an economic term that means to be traded for a profit (Matthew 25:16, 17, 20; James 4:13). We have literally traded in our harmful sin for repentance and siblinghood. That is profoundly a good trade!

If, however, our sibling's first loving rebuke doesn't convince us to repent, Jesus doesn't dissolve the community's responsibility toward us. Instead, two to three other victims or witnesses to how our sin has harmed others are to be called to try to convince us. The witnesses aren't to testify to any court yet, but only to speak directly to the perpetrator of the social sin, again to offer an opportunity to trade the evil of hurting others for the reconciling embrace of community.

Finally, if the person who sinned again refuses the wisdom of confessing and repenting of the way that she or he hurt others, the matter is to be referred to the assembly.

“Assembly” is a much better translation than “church” here. Hearing this, none of Jesus’ followers would have understood any meaning of church, but they would have understood a synagogue or any specific gathering of a religious community.

Now, this passage must be understood in the context of first-century Judaism and Christianity for what follows to make sense and be connected. When Jesus says the matter is to be told to the assembly, he doesn’t mean that the issue should be broadcast to everyone. Instead, it was to be referred to the congregation council or *beit din* of the synagogue and, later, to the elders of an assembly of Christians. Three judges (to prevent ties) would sit and hear disagreements between the members of each synagogue.

Paul retains and recommends this practice in his gentile congregations (1 Corinthians 6:1-6). It was only these judges who could rule as to whether a person was allowed to remain in a congregation or could be thrown out, to be treated as a gentile or tax collector. But we must note that Jesus developed a reputation for eating and drinking with tax collectors and certainly ministered to gentiles as well.

The bottom line is that we are never to give up on helping people stop and repent of sins that hurt others. The assembly of believers is to always stand up for the cause of the injured and take radical action when one member’s sins hurt others—out of overflowing love for *both* the victim and the perpetrator. Helping restore people who sin and hurt others, which is all of us, is important business. Jesus isn’t willing to let anyone go and died to save the whole world. Our responsibility to the victim is to believe him and defend his cause, and our responsibility to the perpetrator is to love him by ceaselessly working to stop the ways he sinfully hurts others



*Cory Driver is a minister of word and service, and the director of the Transformational Leadership Academy in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. He earned his doctorate in Jewish religious cultures from Emory University, Atlanta. Cory lives with his family in Indianapolis.*

# Gathered In His Name

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:20 [NIV]

The puzzle is based on Matthew 18:15-20



Come Together

K U H E A V E N K L H R M I K  
C N E X G L I S T E N E R I L  
T U A S Y L O O S E Q E A J E  
O V S M Z R A Q X G T N T Z Z  
R G U X E C Q W G S O Y E W F  
B C O Y L H C H I Z F Y E D O  
U G H E X H L S D X W D A T W  
L B R O T H E R K N M I M W H  
S G L C Y E K F A T H E R O S  
Q M A J R H A F E W Q K U S B  
F K J T C E P R X U K B B R B  
P A E R H P F T T C D K P F D  
A M U M M E X U C H A Z H N K  
B H G L M X R I S G N H I G Q  
C Y D E T O A G R E E B K K R

REFUSE

FATHER

HEAVEN

FAULT

CHURCH

NAME

BIND

TWO

GATHER

EARTH

BROTHER

LOOSE

SISTER

AGREE

LISTEN