

KOUNTZE STAFF

Pr. Lucy Wynard	Senior Pastor
Pr. Shari Duminy	Transitional Associate Pastor
Pr. Ashley Hall	Associate Pastor
Kristin Boe	Director of Faith Formation
Debbie Bogue	Office Manager
Danielle Barrett	Administrative Assistant
Noni Cambridge	Staff Treasurer
Judi Boe	Financial Secretary
Jim Smejkal	Bldg. Super./Dir. of Cong. Activities
Louis Flake	Night Manager
Kayla Slaight	Janitorial Staff
Barbara Carlsen	Dir. of Music & Fine Arts
Mark Jones	Organist
David Gerard	Saturday Accompanist
Shannon Picha	Nursery Director
Susann Henry	Food Pantry Director
Jill Conway	Director of Kountze Commons



KOUNTZE

Memorial Lutheran Church

2650 Farnam Street
402-341-7761

Omaha, NE 68131
www.kmlchurch.org

December 16 & 17, 2023

Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church is a vibrant, historic faith community that welcomes all and provides ministries for all ages and walks of life. We are a "City-wide Church with a World-wide Ministry" and have been worshiping, growing, and serving in downtown Omaha for over 160 years. If you are new to Kountze Memorial, we invite you to visit the Welcome Desk in the Fellowship Hall for more information about who we are and what we do.

Holy Communion

All who are baptized and trust in Christ's presence in Holy Communion are invited to commune at the Lord's Table. Children not yet communing will receive a blessing. It is the understanding of the universal Church that those who wish to commune with bread only (especially for health reasons) have communed fully. Our form of distribution is Intinction. You will receive the wafer in your hand and then dip into the wine.

Children in Worship

We believe that all are welcome in worship and encourage families to worship together. Activity bags, children's Bibles, and bulletins are available, as well as a room just off the west side of the main sanctuary, that includes a TV and a variety of toys, games, and books for young children.

Nursery

Our nursery is available from 8:45 AM—noon for children 0—2 years. Please ask an usher if you are unsure as to where our nursery is and would like to use it.

Attendance Cards

All those attending worship are encouraged to fill out the card included in your bulletin and place in the offering plate. Offering plates are located by the doors in the Nave.

Large Print Bulletins and Listening Devices

Please speak to an usher if you would like a large print bulletin or an assisted listening device.

E-news & Social Media

If you would like to receive our weekly e-news and monthly e-newsletter, add your e-mail address to the attendance card in your bulletin.

Thank you for supporting the ministries of Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church.



Today at Kountze Memorial

Altar Flowers are given in gratitude for grandson Simon's 2nd birthday given by Kimberly Grassmeyer

Kountze Café

9:30—11:00 AM

Join us each Sunday for breakfast. The suggested donation is \$5 adults, \$2.50 children 12 and younger for the hot breakfast and a free-will donation for the continental breakfast. **Please Note:** Breakfast **will not** be served on December 24th, but coffee and cookies will be available following the 9:00 AM Worship.

Faith Formation

Children's Christmas Program

Sunday, December 17

9:00 AM

We are excited again, to hear our children sing and tell the story of Christ's birth. The children (grades preK-6) will present the Christmas story with music this morning.

Sunday School and Children's Choir

10:10 AM

Ages 2 years-6th Grade

Following the Christmas program this morning, there will be a "wrap party" for the children during Sunday School time. We will have a small magic show, treats, and games. The kids always work so hard for the Christmas Program, and this will be a fun reward for their dedication. Sunday School will not be held December 24, 31, or January 7. Join us again on January 14 in the 2nd Floor Sunday School Rooms. We will continue with the rotation model. Children's Choir students will join Barb Carlsen on the 2nd floor in the Sunday School Music Room again on January 14.

Today at Kountze Memorial, *continued*

Youth Forum

Lower Level Youth Room

10:10 AM

This week: ELCA Youth Leadership Summit Report **Next**

Week: Merry Christmas! Enjoy the day in worship and with your families.

Advent Focus

In this second week of Advent has us focusing on the theme, "Lament Now." During Sunday worship we will use the Gospel text. On Wednesdays, we turn to the prophet Isaiah.

Adult Forum

Join us at 10:10 AM on Sunday mornings in the Fellowship Hall. **This week:** ELCA Youth Leadership Summit **Next**

Week: Fellowship

Collecting Children's Books

New or Slightly Used

The WELCA (Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) Board is asking our women's circles, as well as the congregation, to bring new or slightly used children's books for our Pantry. We will be **collecting books until December 18**. Please leave your children's books in the Pantry Box located in the Fellowship Hall. Thank you.

This Week at Kountze Memorial

December 17 Sunday

Advent 3

8:00 AM & 10:00 AM Adult Choir

Rehearsal

9:00 AM & 11:00 AM Worship

9:00 AM Nursery (0-2 yrs)

9:00 AM Children's Christmas Program

9:30 AM Kountze Cafe - Breakfast

10:10 AM Faith Formation Hour

December 18 Monday

10:00 AM Pantry

December 19 Tuesday

9:00 AM Staff Meeting

12:00 PM KETV Board

1:00 PM Prayer Shawl Group

6:00 PM Congregation Council

6:30 PM Building Use—Piano Recital

December 20 Wednesday

11:00 AM Advent Lunch

12:15 PM Worship

5:00 PM Advent Dinner

6:30 PM Worship

December 21 Thursday

4:00 PM Healing Gift Free Clinic

6:00 PM Circle 5

December 22 Friday

OFFICE CLOSED (at noon)

December 23 Saturday

5:00 PM Worship

December 24 Sunday

Advent 4

Christmas Eve

8:00 AM Adult Choir Rehearsal

9:00 AM Worship (Note: No 11:00 AM Worship)

9:00 AM Nursery (0-2 yrs)

4:00 PM Worship

6:30 PM Adult Choir Rehearsal

7:00 PM Worship

11:00 PM Worship

December 25 Monday

Christmas Day

OFFICE CLOSED

10:00 AM Worship

December 25 Tuesday

OFFICE CLOSED

For Your Calendar/News & Notes

Advent Meals & Worship

Lunch: 11:00 AM – Noon

Supper: 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Worship: 6:30

Menu for December 20

Chicken a la King

Biscuits

Side Salad

Dessert

Christmas Ushers/Worship Assistants Sign-up

If you will be here on Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day, we could use your ushering expertise. There is a sign-up sheet in the back of the Nave for you to sign up if you're able to help. We also ask Lectors and Communion Assistants to call the church office or sign up on SignUp Genius for Lector and Communion Assistants. Thanks!

**ELCA Young Adult Gathering
Young Adults (19–25-year-olds)
July 16-20, 2024, in New Orleans**

An ELCA Young Adult Gathering will take place at the same time as the ELCA National Youth Gathering. Each group will have separate daytime offerings followed by a joint Evening Program. As this is a new event, plans are still being made. We hope you will consider attending this event. Please contact Pr. Shari or the church office if you are interested in attending. For more info or to register, go to

<https://www.elca.church/gathering/attend/young-adult-gathering>

Join Us in Spreading Joy: Offer a Ride to Church!

Are you looking for a simple yet impactful way to make a difference in someone's day? Consider sharing the gift of a ride to church! Your willingness to offer a ride even one or two weeks a month can brighten someone else's Sunday. Please call or email the church office to see if there's someone in your neighborhood or on your way to church that would like a ride. Open your heart and car doors to help others experience the joy of attending church.

**2024 Summer Youth & Young Adult Trip Sponsorships
ELCA Youth Gathering/Young Adult Gathering
December 1 – 24**

During the season of Advent, we ask that you check out the Advent Sponsor Tree in the Fellowship Hall to help youth attend the ELCA National Youth Gathering and Young Adult Gathering this summer. Please take an envelope with the amount that you are able to give and print your name on it. Place your donation in the envelope and then place it in the offering plate or bring it to the office. Use the QR Code here or on the trunk of the tree if you would rather give online.



Kountze Food Pantry

Our program with SpartanNash (Family Fare) raised \$875.00 for the Kountze Food Pantry in just 10 days! It was a bonus that we didn't have to collect and count receipts. Thank you to everyone who rounded up at the register. We are still requesting donations of toothbrushes and toothpaste for the Pantry. We try to have them for everyone who asks for one. They will be included in the Christmas gift bags for our guests, along with other hygiene items. St. Michael distributed 200 Christmas bags last week. Kountze will give ours starting December 11. There have also been gloves, socks, hats and scarves offered. The men's lunch group collects toys for the children which we wrapped and placed under the beautiful Christmas tree! There have been candy, cookies and books for all the kids as well. Please sign up with the link below if you would like to serve at the Kountze Food Pantry.

<https://form.jotform.com/200834787701155>

Simply Giving Reminder

If you have changed your pledge for 2024, please remember that your automatic giving will only be altered if we receive written confirmation from you or if you've specifically indicated this change by checking the box on your 2024 pledge card. You can e-mail Debbie in the church office to make changes if you would like. Simply Giving info and registration forms can be found at the Welcome Desk. **2023 Contribution Note:** In order for your offerings to be counted toward your 2023 giving, it needs to be in the office or postmarked no later than December 31, 2023. Thank you for your understanding as well as your ongoing dedication and support.

Worship with Us!

Wednesday, December 20

Lunch: 11:00 AM – Noon

Supper: 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Worship: 12:15 & 6:30 PM

Weekend Worship Times

Saturdays: 5:00 PM

Sundays: 9:00 & 11:00 AM

Please Note: Sunday, December 24,
no 11:00 AM Worship Service

Christmas Eve

Family Service: 4:00 PM

Candlelight: 7:00 & 11:00 PM

Attendance & Giving

Saturday: 29

Sunday: 9:00: 166 **11:00:** 86

Wednesday: 12:15: 30 **6:30:** 66

Total: 407

Streaming: 102 (Sunday & Wednesday)

Pantry Guests Served: 939 (inc. 287 children)

Medical Clinic Guests Served: 11

Offering:

\$10,639.37 (Regular)

\$190,604.38 (Specials)

\$702.93 (Debt Reduction)

Mary finds favor through God's love.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Luke 1:26-38	The birth of Jesus foretold
Monday	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16	The Lord's message to David
Tuesday	Romans 16:25-27	Paul's closing prayer
Wednesday	1 Corinthians 13:1-13	The gift of love
Thursday	Psalms 36	Wickedness and God's goodness
Friday	1 John 4:16-21	God is love
Saturday	Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26	God's promise to David
Sunday	Luke 2:22-40	Jesus presented in the temple



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SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus." **Luke 1:30-31 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Everlasting God, your ways are unsearchable and your love never ending; give us the faith to trust in your Son, child of Mary, and Savior of the World. Amen.

Mealttime Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for this gift of food; give us faith and courage to speak of your steadfast love to all generations. In Jesus' name, amen. (Psalm 89:1)

A Blessing to Give:

May God's grace bless you with faith and love.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- If an angel appeared and told you something, would you believe it? Why or why not?
- How does God's love influence your life?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Luke 1:26-38.

When God's love showers down upon us, it can really turn our lives upside down. That's certainly what happened to Mary. The angel Gabriel announced that she was favored by God and would bear a son who would inherit the throne of King David. Mary was given promises that would seem hard to believe, let alone understand. She was perplexed, to say the least. She had no husband. In her community bearing a child without a husband was nothing less than shameful. Bearing a child in those days was one of the most dangerous events that could happen to a woman. Being ostracized by her neighbors, looking at the prospect of pain, and the possibility of death does not seem like divine favor. This is a story filled with risk, danger, confusion, extreme drama, and surprise. Amid it all, Mary responds with her own act of trust and love and says, "[L]et it be with me according to your word" (v. 38). Mary is the embodiment of a faithful disciple, one who trusts the amazing love of God for her and for all.

Discuss: Do you think Mary's response to Gabriel is surprising?

Pray: **All knowing God, help us to receive your undeserved kindness with courage and love through Jesus Christ, child of Mary, your Son and our Savior. Amen.**

SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings and theme for this week, how can you share the good news of Jesus' birth with someone?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

The scripture readings during Advent point to Jesus. This week we light all four candles on the Advent wreath. The fourth candle is the candle of love. Psalm 89 is a praise song to God for all creation: *"I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations."* Think or talk about the ways we respond to God's great love for us through Jesus. Light the first candle of hope, the second candle of peace, the third candle of joy, and the fourth candle of love and say: ***"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."*** (John 1:5)

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55
Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38