

KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A CITY-WIDE CHURCH WITH A WORLD-WIDE MINISTRY

Lucy Wynard, Senior Pastor

Shari Duminy, Transitional Associate Pastor

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December 17, 2023

9:00 AM & 11:00 AM

THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM



“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

Mark Jones, *organ*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(stand)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P Blessed Jesus, still our hearts as we prepare to confess our sin.

C Amen.

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P Merciful God,

C we know that you lament the ways in which we harm your beloved children. We are greedy, selfish, and self-centered. We are focused on what we can get, instead of what we can give. Please forgive us for our sin and turn us from our wicked ways that we may be voices crying out in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord!” Amen.

P Take heart, beloveds! God ✝ has heard your prayer and your sin is forgiven. You are now set free to point others to Jesus. May you be a witness who testifies to the light, that all may believe through him.

C Amen.

CHILDREN'S BLESSING 9:00 AM

Children (aged 3 years through 5th grade) are invited to come forward for a blessing. Then, they may either return to their seat and use the Spark Bible and/or activity bags during the regular sermon, or follow Ms. Carlson to prepare for the Christmas program.

(stand)

ADVENT WREATH HYMN

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah

ELW 240 vs. 3

- 3 Light three candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway
for the King of glory.**

Text: Wayne L. Wold, b. 1954
Text © 1984 Fortress Press, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH AND PRAYER

- P** By the light of this third candle, we *lament* now. May we no longer suffer alone. May our siblings in Christ take notice of our pain and the pain of others. May we each act, in our own way, to bring your comfort to our spheres of influence. We can do nothing alone, but with you, all things are possible. We stand together knowing that *joy* comes in the morning! In the Name of the Father, Son, ✠ and Holy Spirit,
- G Amen.**

(light three candles)

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

ELW 257 vs. 1, 2, 7

- 1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.**

- 2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
embracing all things far and nigh:
in strength and beauty come and stay;
teach us your will and guide our way. *Refrain***

Refrain

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

- 7 O come, O King of nations, come,
O Cornerstone that binds in one:
refresh the hearts that long for you;
restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain***


Text: Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum, Köln, 1710; tr. composite
Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

APOSTOLIC GREETING

- P** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- G And also with you.**


KYRIE

Leader




Lord have mer - cy on — us, Lord have mer - cy on — us


All



Lord have mer - cy on — us, Lord have mer - cy on — us



Christ have mer - cy on — us, Christ have mer - cy on — us



Lord have mer - cy on — us, Lord have mer - cy on — us.

GLORIA



Sing glo - ry to God, and peace on earth.



We sing glo - ry to God in the high - est.



We — wor - ship you, we — give — you thanks.



We — praise you for — your glo - ry Lord.



Sing glo - ry to God, and peace on earth.



Glo - ry to God in the high - est.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- P** God, who saves,
C we testify that you are the light of the world. In our lamentation, allow your Holy Darkness to enshroud us with hope, peace, and joy. May you be with us in our pilgrimage through barren lands. In Jesus' name, Amen.

11:00 AM worship service continues on page 9 with the First Reading

WORD

(sit)

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM (9:00 AM)

During the sacrament of baptism, we are given the responsibilities to share God's promises with our children. Today, our children will share the message of Christ's birth with us. We hope you will enjoy and appreciate our children's offering. We thank the parents and the staff at Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church for helping our children prepare.

JOHN 1:1, 14

Harlow Burton

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

HYMN

*O Come, All Ye Faithful
Congregation sings as children enter*

ELW 283

**1 O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him,
born the king of angels:**

**2 The highest, most holy,
light of light eternal,
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father
now in flesh appearing! *Refrain***

Refrain

**O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!**

**3 Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God
in the highest: *Refrain***

**4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing: *Refrain***

LUKE 1:26-38

Gwen Wemhoff, Wyatt Wemhoff, Siri Dey, Willa Jones

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

HYMN

He Came Down

Cameroon Traditional

MATTHEW 1:18-25, LUKE 2:1-7

*Rowan Burton, Edward Jordan, Annalise Hansen,
Carson Sedlak, Grace Dey, Mila Reilly*

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

HYMN

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, alt.

Music: Felix Mendelssohn, 1809-1847

Henry Schwieger, Evelyn Drickey, Laney Brown, *soloists*

Luke 2:8-14*Evelyn Drickey, Van Aubry*

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

HYMN*Angels We Have Heard on High*

French carol; tr. H. F. Henry
Mila Reilly, Grace Dey, Siri Dey, *soloists*

LUKE 2:15-20*Ryce Brown, Laney Brown*

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

HYMN*Away in a Manger*

James R. Murray, 1841-1905

MATTHEW 2:1-11*Thomas Jensen, Matilda Jones, Henry Schwieger*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel."

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

HYMN*Joy to the World*

English melody, 18th cent.; Lowell Mason 1792-1872
Thomas Jensen, Gwen Wemhoff, Andrew Hansen, *soloists*

POEM by Thomas Jensen

Olivia McCormick

*The Angel told Mary, He was the Messiah, the Promised one.
Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem and had Jesus in a lonely manger.
There were shepherds and three wise men who brought gifts for our God.
Jesus our Savior was born. Let us Rejoice.*

HYMN

Silent Night, Holy Night!

ELW 281

Children sing first verse twice; congregation joins for verse 2 and 3

- 1 Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.
- 2 Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
- 3 Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792-1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820-1885

READINGS

Andrew Hansen, Mary Jensen, Bernadette Jones

There is a German Christmas Carol from the 1600s entitled, *Beside Thy Cradle Here I stand*. This is where we end our time today, pondering what this gift in the manger means for us. This wondering is a life-long journey. Thankfully, each year it returns to us.

As we have learned and shared with you this story today, we pray that it will settle again in your heart and mind. That this gift of the Christ child in the manger, Jesus, coming into the world fills you with all hope and peace in believing.

Please don't walk away too quickly. Allow this wonderful gift to fill your mind and heart with all that Jesus brings. And then as the Body of Christ, we share his life and love with the world.

(Congregation sings last refrain twice as children rejoin their families)

African American Spiritual

Wyatt Wemhoff, Mary Jensen, Carson Sedlak, *soloists*

Refrain

**Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born!**

2 The shepherds feared and trembled
when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*

1 While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. *Refrain*

3 Down in a lonely manger
the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

9:00 AM worship service continues on page 12 with the Nicene Creed

(sit)

FIRST READING

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. ⁸For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. ¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Psalm 126 (read responsively)

- ^{46b}My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
⁴⁷my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸**for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.**
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
⁴⁹you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.
⁵⁰**You have mercy on those who fear you,**
from generation to generation.
⁵¹You have shown strength with your arm
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
⁵²**casting down the mighty from their thrones**
and lifting up the lowly.
⁵³You have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴**You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,**
to remember the promise of mercy,
⁵⁵the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever.

SECOND READING

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing Blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil. ²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

☒ The word of the Lord.

☑ Thanks be to God.

(stand)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Pre - pare our hearts, our minds, our souls

To hear your word, to know your truth, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

P The Holy Gospel according to St. John.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

HOLY GOSPEL

John 1:6-8, 19-28

John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said. ²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

P The Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pastor Duminy

(stand)

HYMN OF THE DAY

Let Justice Flow like Streams

ELW 717

**1 Let justice flow like streams
of sparkling water, pure,
enabling growth, refreshing life,
abundant, cleansing, sure.**

**2 Let righteousness roll on
as others' cares we heed,
an ever-flowing stream of faith
translated into deed.**

**3 So may God's plumb line, straight,
define our measure true,
and justice, right, and peace pervade
this world our whole life through.**

Text: Jane Parker Huber, b. 1926
Text © 1984 Jane Parker Huber, admin. Westminster John Knox Press

THE NICENE CREED

P God has made us God's people through our Baptism into Christ.
Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

C We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Response: P Merciful God,
 C hear our prayer.

(In our prayers today, during a time of silence, pray for those listed below and for others according to their needs)

Prayers This Week: Paul Carlson, Martha Eckmann, Marilyn Hofeldt, Nita Mueller, Gary Westerman, Chet Worm

On-going Care: Cheri Biggs, John & Jane Bodnar, Don Burton, Ellie Carlson, Shirley Dietrich, Mike Edris, Jessica Hannon, Richard & Betty Holzer, Joan Jacobson-Trotter, Jason Klonglan, Orville & Julie Knapp, Ruth & Charles Martis, Lara McCormick, Idonna Meyer, Linda Peltz, Kathy Preininger, David Samaria, Jim West, Darlene White, Deb Woosley

Other Prayers: *Those serving in the military*— Wyatt Johnson, Tyler Johnston, Michael McNeill, Daniel Milstead, Cody Ray, Sheldon Skovgaard, Michael Vutov, Joel Woosley

Other Prayers: *Those serving in mission*— Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, India; Dr. Stephen & Jodi Swanson, Tanzania; Katie Larson, Colombia; Rev. Bridget Gautieri, Wittenburg Center, Germany; and Dan & Ginny Rath, international translators; our sister congregation, the American Church in Berlin, as they assist refugees from the war in Ukraine

Other Prayers: *Seminarians*— James Holzer, Katie Larson, Giselle Loucks

THE PEACE IS SHARED

P The peace of Christ be with you always.
C And also with you.

MEAL

(sit)

THE OFFERING IS RECIEVED

We glorify God in our giving. Our offering is an act of worship that makes the ministries of this church possible. We encourage everyone to give. If you are visiting with us today, please do not feel obligated to participate in this portion of worship. If you would like, use the QR code scanner on your smart phone to give online or place your offering in the plates that are located at the entrances to the Sanctuary. For those of you watching through our media outlets, if you are able, please mail in your offering or donate online. Thank you!



THE TABLE IS PREPARED

MUSICAL OFFERING

9:00 AM

11:00 AM

Kountze Childrens Instrumental Ensemble
“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” arr. Labenski
Mark Jones, organ, Jean Johnson, piano

(stand)

OFFERTORY HYMN

Blessed Be the God of Israel

ELW 250 vs. 1 & 2



1 Blessed be the God of Is - ra - el who comes to set us free
2 With prom-ised mer - cy will God still the cov - e - nant re - call,



and rais - es up new hope for us: a Branch from Da-vid's tree.
the oath once sworn to A - bra-ham, from foes to save us all;



So have the proph-ets long de-clared that with a might-y arm
that we might wor - ship with-out fear and of - fer lives of praise,



God would turn back our en - e - mies and all who wish us harm.
in ho - li - ness and righ - teous-ness to serve God all our days.

OFFERING PRAYER

- ☐ God our provider,
- ☒ by your merciful hand abundance springs up from the earth. Receive and bless these gifts of your own bounty. Let them be a sign of your steadfast love and faithfulness for all people, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

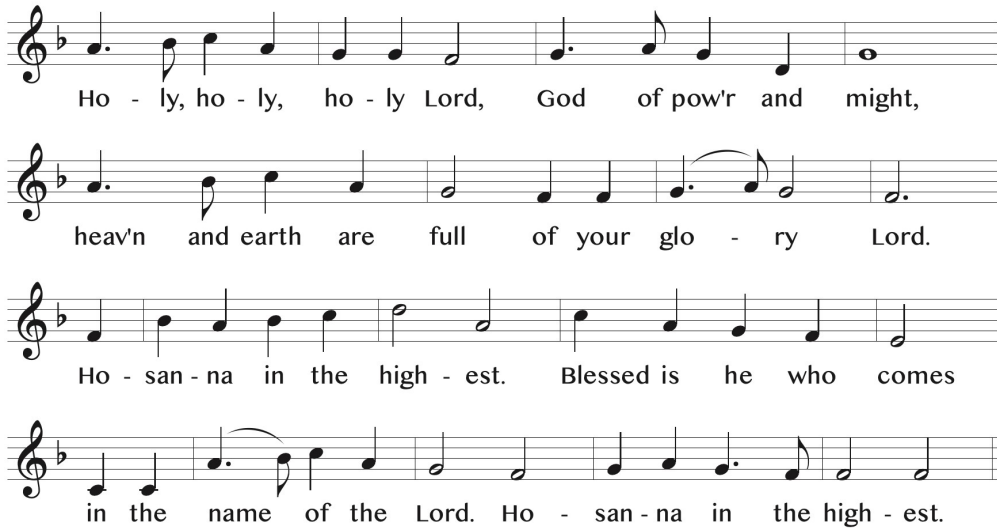
HOLY COMMUNION

- ☐ 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,
- ☒ It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE FOR SUNDAYS

- ☐ It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
... we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry Lord.
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

- P** Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life: ...
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

- C** Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

- P** With this bread and cup ...
We look with hope for his coming.

- C** Come, Lord Jesus.

- P** Holy God, we long for your Spirit ...
Bring the gift of peace on earth.

- C** Come, Holy Spirit.

- P** All praise and glory are yours, ...
one God, now and forever.

- C** Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

C **Our Father, who art in heaven,**
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

AGNUS DEI



INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Come, take your place at the table.

C In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together.

(sit)

THE DISTRIBUTION

All baptized Christians who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and his Real Presence in, with and under the bread and wine, are welcome to the Lord's Supper. We believe that this is the Lord's table and is he who invites you. So you who are strong in faith, come with gratitude. You who feel weak in faith, come to be strengthened. And you who feel you have no faith, come so that the God of steadfast love will touch your heart with hope and joy. The form of distribution is intinction: you will receive the consecrated bread and then you may dip the bread into the wine. Gluten free bread is available upon request.

HYMNS DURING COMMUNION

All Earth Is Hopeful

ELW 266

- 1 All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.**
- 2 People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";
she conceived him, "God with us,"
our brother, whose birth
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.**
- 3 Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;
new highways opened, new protocols declared.
Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!**
- 4 We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib.
This same Lord Jesus today has come to live
in our world; he is present, in neighbors we see
our Jesus is with us, and ever sets us free.**

Text: Alberto Taulé, b. 1932; tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, b. 1946

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1 Now the heav - ens start to whis - per, as the veil is grow - ing thin.
 2 Heav - y clouds that block the moon - light now be - gin to drift a - way.
 3 Christ, e - ter - nal Sun of jus - tice, Christ, the rose of wis - dom's seed,



Earth from slum - ber wakes to lis - ten to the stir - ring, faint with - in:
 Dia - mond bril - liance through the dark - ness shines the hope of com - ing day.
 come to bless with fire and fra - grance hours of yearn - ing, hurt, and need.



seed of prom - ise, deep - ly plant - ed, child to spring from Jes - se's stem!
 Christ, the morn - ing star of splen - dor, gleams with - in a world grown dim.
 In the lone - ly, in the strang - er, in the out - cast, hid from view;



Like the soil be - neath the frost - line, hearts grow soft to wel - come him.
 Heav - en's em - ber fans to full - ness; hearts grow warm to wel - come him.
 Child who comes to grace the man - ger, teach our hearts to wel - come you.

(stand)

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953
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PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P Generous God,

C in bread and cup you have revealed your glory for all people to see together. Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim your good news of liberation and release, brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

- P** The God of peace bless you, the love of Christ sustain you in hope, and the anointing of the Spirit,
✝ remain upon you now and forever.
- C** Amen.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

RECESSIONAL HYMN

People, Look East

ELW 248 vs. 1, 3, 4

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Guest, is on the way.</p> | <p>3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim,
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Star, is on the way.</p> |
| <p>4 Angels announce with shouts of mirth
him who brings new life to earth.
Set ev'ry peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Lord, is on the way.</p> | |

DISMISSAL

- P** Go in peace. Keep awake.
- C** Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Mark Jones, *organ*

✝ ✝ ✝

Liturgy arranged by ©2022 Cynthia I. Gonzales, Ph.D., Music Director at FLC-San Marcos, TX.
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Worship with Us!

Wednesdays, December 20

Lunch: 11:00 AM – Noon

Supper: 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Worship: 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

Children's Christmas Program

Sunday, December 17, 9:00 AM



December 24

Advent 4: 9:00 (no 11:00 AM)

Christmas Eve: 4:00, 7:00, 11:00 PM

December 25

Christmas Day: 10:00 AM

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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Written by Pr. Greg Priebbenow and edited by Vibrant Faith Ministries.
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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.

Mealtime 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