

KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A CITY-WIDE CHURCH WITH A WORLD-WIDE MINISTRY

Lucy Wynard, Senior Pastor
Shari Duminy, Transitional Associate Pastor
H. Ashley Hall, Associate Pastor

2650 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68131-3616
402-341-7761
www.kmlchurch.org

December 24, 2023

9:00 AM

FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT



God keeps the promise made to David to give him an everlasting throne. The angel tells Mary that God will give David's throne to her son Jesus. She is perplexed by Gabriel's greeting and by the news of her coming pregnancy, but she is able still to say, "Count me in." We who know that Jesus is called king only as he is executed still find it a mystery hard to fathom, but with Mary today we hear the news of what God is up to and say, "Count us in."

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 God, prepare us to be womb-bearers of your love as we confess our sin and receive your forgiveness on this day.

C Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

P Saving God,

C we confess that we have not always been open to participating in your miracles. We have been too concerned about what others will think of us. We have refused your blessing in favor of going our own way. We have missed out on opportunities to carry you to our neighbors and friends. We are sorry. Please forgive our selfish misdeeds, Amen.

P Praise the Lord ✠, your sin is forgiven. You will never walk alone, for Christ is with us. May you carry Immanuel everywhere that you go, as you affirm, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

C Amen.

(sit)

CHILDREN’S BLESSING

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. Boe upstairs for an activity in the Sunday School room, and Ms. Carlsen for Children’s Choir.

(stand)

ADVENT WREATH HYMN

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah

ELW 240 vs. 4

- 4 Light four candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
He is coming, tell the glad tidings.
Let your lights be shining!**

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

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH AND PRAYER

- ☞** By the light of this fourth candle, we receive your *peace now*. May it be a peace which surpasses our understanding because it makes no sense at all. Despite our circumstances, may your *love* illuminate our pathways. May Jesus walk with us in the hills and valleys of our lives. And when we find our way, may we send up a light for others to follow. You have called us favored ones and so we are. In the Name of the Father, Son, ✠ and Holy Spirit,
- ☞ Amen.**

(light all four candles)

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

Fling Wide the Door

ELW 259

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Fling wide the door, unbar the gate;
the King of glory comes in state;
the Lord of lords and King of kings,
the Savior of the world who brings
his great salvation to the earth.
So raise a shout of holy mirth
and praise our God and Lord,
Creator, Spirit, Word.</p> <p>2 He is the rock of our belief,
the heart of mercy's gentle self.
His kingly crown is holiness;
his scepter is his loveliness;
he brings our sorrows to an end.
Now gladly praise our king and friend,
and worship him with song
for saving us from wrong.</p> | <p>3 Oh, happy towns and blessed lands
that live by their true king's commands.
And blessed be the hearts he rules,
the humble places where he dwells.
He is the rightful Son of bliss
who fills our lives and makes us his,
creator of the world,
our only strength for good.</p> <p>4 Come, Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ;
our hearts are open wide in trust.
Oh, show us now your lovely grace,
upon our sorrows shine your face,
and let your Holy Spirit guide
our journey in your grace so wide.
We praise your holy name,
from age to age the same!</p> |
|--|---|


Text: Georg Weissel, 1590-1635; tr. Gracia Grindal, b. 1943
Text © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

APOSTOLIC GREETING

- ☞** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- ☞ 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 Word made flesh,

G thank you that you chose to be born through the body of a teenage and unwed mother. May we always remember that you choose to treasure those whom the world deems worthless and you empower them to carry the good news. Give us the obedience of Mary, that we may do your will. Amen.

WORD

(sit)

FIRST READING

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, However, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you." ⁴But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

L The word of the Lord.

G Thanks be to God.

Psalms Luke 1:46b-55 (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

Romans 16:25-27

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

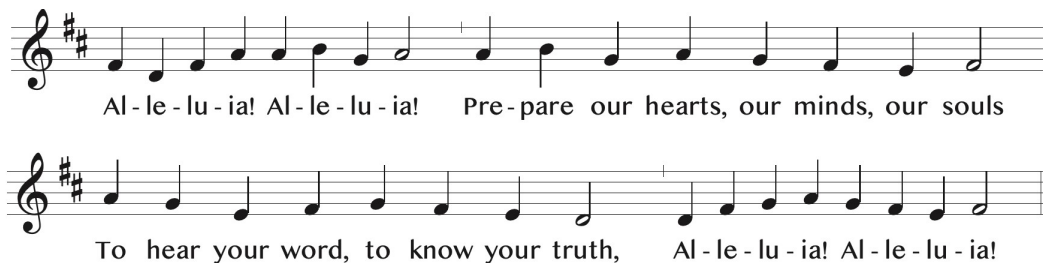
Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

(stand)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



P The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

HOLY GOSPEL

Luke 1:26-38

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

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.

P The Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

(sit)
SERMON

Pastor Hall

(stand)
HYMN OF THE DAY

Savior of the Nations, Come

ELW 263 vs. 1-3, 5

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Savior of the nations, come;
virgin's son, make here your home.
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth:
God has chosen such a birth. | 3 Wondrous birth—oh, wondrous child—
from his throne, a virgin mild!
Very God, and Mary's son,
eager now his race to run! |
| 2 Not by human flesh and blood,
but the mystic Breath of God,
was the Word of God made flesh,
fruit of woman, blossom fresh. | 5 Now your manger, shining bright,
hallows night with newborn light.
Night cannot this light subdue;
let our faith shine ever new. |

Text: attr. Ambrose of Milan, 340-397; Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. hymnal version
Text © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.

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,
 G 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: Martha Eckmann, Nita Mueller, Marce Picha, Gary Westerman

On-going Care: Cheri Biggs, John & Jane Bodnar, Don Burton, Ellie Carlson, Shirley Dietrich, Mike Edris, Jessica Hannon, Marilyn Hofeldt, 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.
G 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

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Savior of the Nations, Come

setting by James Melby

(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

- P** God our provider,
C 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.

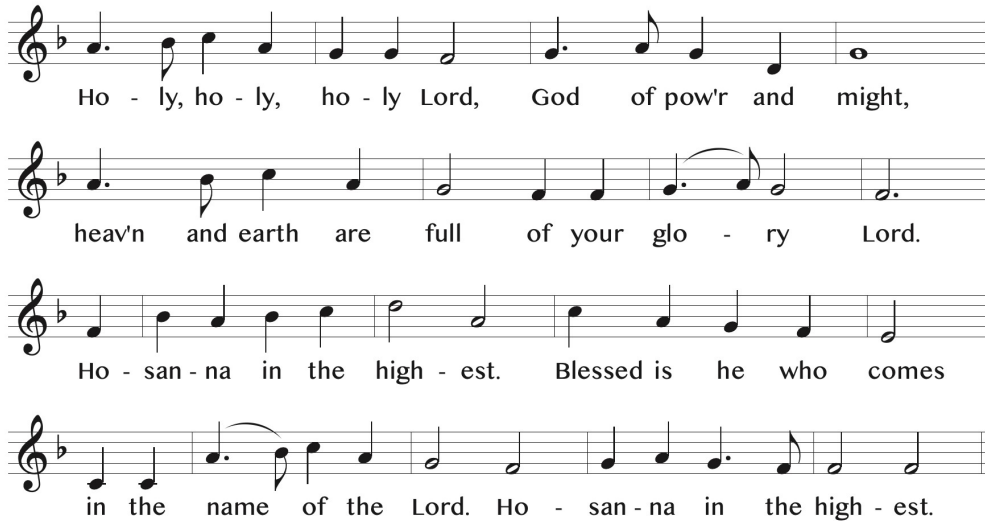
HOLY COMMUNION

- P** The Lord be with you. **C** And also with you.
P Lift up your hearts. **C** We lift them to the Lord.
P Let us give thanks to the Lord,
C 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

- ☐ 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:

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

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

- ☑ **Come, Lord Jesus.**

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

- ☑ **Come, Holy Spirit.**

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

- ☑ **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

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

ELW 257 vs. 5-8

Refrain

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

**5 O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.**

Refrain

**6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
O Sun of justice, now draw near.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight.**

Refrain

**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

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

Refrain

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| <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>2 Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there.
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
that in course the flow'r may flourish.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Rose, 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> |

Text: Eleanor E. Farjeon, 1881-1965

Text © Miss E. Farjeon Will Trust, by permission of David Higham Associates.

(stand)

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- P** Generous God,
- G** 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

- ☞ 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.
- ☞ Amen.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

RECESSIONAL HYMN

Let All Together Praise Our God

ELW 287 vs. 1-5

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Let all together praise our God
before the highest throne;
today God opens heav'n again
and sends the only Son,
and sends the only Son.</p> <p>2 From God's right hand the Son descends,
is born an infant small,
and lies in poverty, his bed
a manger in a stall,
a manger in a stall.</p> | <p>3 O tender Child, you veil in flesh
the splendor of your might;
a servant's garb now wraps the one
who clothed the sky with light,
who clothed the sky with light.</p> <p>4 Your mother feeds you tenderly,
sings you a lullaby,
while angels, hailing David's heir,
your glory magnify,
your glory magnify.</p> <p>5 A wonderful exchange you make:
you take our flesh and blood,
and in return give us to share
the shining realm of God,
the shining realm of God.</p> |
|---|---|

Text: Nikolaus Herman, 1480-1561; tr. hymnal version
Text © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.

DISMISSAL

- ☞ Go in peace. Keep awake.
- ☞ 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!



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

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 23 & 24, 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

Television Broadcast is sponsored to the glory of God by the Weible & Koch families in memory of Gene and Jerry; The Christmas Eve broadcast is sponsored to the glory of God in appreciation of the pastors, staff, and media crew of Kountze Memorial given by Karen & Shirley Bonneau

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

Sunday School and Children's Choir

10:10 AM

Ages 2 years-6th Grade

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.

Youth Forum

Lower Level Youth Room

10:10 AM

This week: Merry Christmas! Enjoy the day in worship and with your families. **Next Week:** Games

Adult Forum

Join us at 10:10 AM on Sunday mornings in the Fellowship Hall. **This week:** Fellowship **Next Week:** Fellowship

This Week at Kountze Memorial

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 Family Service
6:30 PM Adult Choir Rehearsal
7:00 PM Candlelight Service
11:00 PM Candlelight Service

December 25 Monday

Christmas Day
OFFICE CLOSED
10:00 AM Worship

December 25 Tuesday

OFFICE CLOSED

December 27 Wednesday

12:15 PM Worship

December 28 Thursday

4:00 PM Healing Gift Free Clinic

December 29 Friday

5:00 PM Pantry

December 30 Saturday

5:00 PM Worship

December 31 Sunday

Christmas 1

New Year's Eve

9:00 AM & 11:00 AM Worship

9:00 AM Nursery (0-2 yrs)

10:10 AM Youth Forum/Adult Forum

For Your Calendar/News & Notes

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>

2024 Summer Youth & Young Adult Trip Sponsorships ELCA Youth Gathering/Young Adult Gathering

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>

Birthday Card Shower

Dr. Gary Westerman will turn 80 years old on December 26. His wife, Judy, asked that we share his address in case you would like to send Gary belated birthday wishes. Birthday wishes can be sent to Gary at Astoria Senior Living - Villa, Room 131, 9220 Western Ave, Omaha, NE 68114

Cards with Friends

Thursday, January 4

2:00 PM

Meet in the Fellowship Hall for a time together playing cards. All are welcome. Bring a snack to share.

Confirmation Resumes

January 10

Confirmation resumes again at Saint Timothy's Church.

Kountze Family Service Project:

Friday, January 12

5:00 PM

Join us in the Pantry to volunteer and then following the service to our community, we will be serving pizza and watching a movie in the Fellowship Hall. Bring a friend, your favorite movie, and a snack to share.

Middle School Gathering

Grades 6-8

January 13-14, 2024

We will be gathering at Sheridan Lutheran Church in Lincoln. The cost will be covered by Kountze Memorial. Registration deadline is January 1, 2024.

New Member Class

January 14 & 21

12:15 PM

If you are interested in finding out more about Kountze Memorial or would like to join our congregation, we ask you to consider attending our next New Member Class. Childcare is available. Please plan on attending both classes.

Lunch will be served. New members will be received on Sunday, January 28. Please call the church office if you have questions and let us know if you plan to attend so we can prepare for lunch.

High School Retreat for Grades 9-12

Carol Joy Holling Camp

January 19-21, 2024

Theme: (un)Equal

Come and join us as we dive into this past summer's theme, "UnEqual". Along with the lessons we will learn about God's love, we will also be experiencing some favorite camp activities, God's creation, and of course, fellowship! Cost \$100 per camper. This cost includes lodging, meals, and programming on Friday through Sunday. Register by January 17 at <https://www.cjhcenter.org/hs-retreat>

Annual Reports

Due January 28

If you are responsible for a report in our Annual Report, please have them turned in to Debbie Bogue no later than January 28. Reports are welcome—and preferred—anytime before that date. Thanks.

Dinners for 8

Consider signing up to join a dinners for 8 group in February, March, and April. It is a time when your group will have a meal together each month. This meal can take place in homes, in restaurants, or at the church. Or you may decide to attend a fish fry or another organization's fundraiser. It is up to your group. Please **sign up by January 21** at the Welcome Desk or by calling the church office. You will be informed about the groups, so you can begin to find times and places to meet.

Summer Bible Camp at Carol Joy Holling!

Register by January 31 for Early Bird Pricing (Save \$50)

Kountze Memorial will cover the cost if you register by January 31. If you register after this date, you will need to pay the additional cost. Kountze Camp Week is June 16-21, but you can attend camp whenever it is convenient for you. Send a copy of your registration to KMLC. Register at <https://www.caroljoyholling.org/register>

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.

Altar Flowers, Eternal Candle, & TV Broadcast

The new sign up posters are now available. Be sure to sign up for your special date early so it's still available. Altar Flowers are provided by Janousek Florist and cost \$20 a

bouquet. The Eternal Candle is \$7.50 and sponsoring a TV broadcast is \$210.

Just a 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 ongoing dedication and support.

Kountze Food Pantry

Thank-you to everyone who donated to the Food Pantry and made this Christmas special for our guests! St. Michael Church contributed 200 goody bags with laundry soap and many items we don't usually have. Kountze provided 250 bags with a complete hygiene kit. Several groups collected toys and books for the children and the common room was beautifully decorated! In January the Pantry is collecting gloves and mittens for men, women and children. We get lots of hats donated but never seem to have enough gloves. If you would like to contribute you may leave the items in the donation box in Fellowship Hall. Another option is to order online and have them delivered to Kountze in care of the Pantry. As always, we are looking for volunteers. If you would like to donate your time, you may sign up at the <https://form.jotform.com/200834787701155>

Attendance & Giving

Saturday: 201

Sunday: 9:00: 150 **11:00:** 47

Wednesday: 12:15: 27 **6:30:** 53

Total: 505

Streaming: (Sunday & Wednesday) 120

Pantry Guests Served: 901 (inc. 287 children)

Medical Clinic Guests Served: 21

Offering:

\$28,194.78 (Regular)

\$9,480.3 (Specials)

\$1,738.33 (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	Psalm 36	Wickedness and God's goodness
Friday	1 John 4:16-21	God is love
Saturday	Psalm 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: Isaiah 61:10—62:3; Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40