

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 24 & 25, 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



The Christmas Eve Television 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

Faith Formation

Sunday School and Children's Choir 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

12/31: Games

Adult Forum

Join us at 10:10 AM on Sunday mornings in the Fellowship Hall. **12/31: Fellowship**

This Week at Kountze Memorial

December 24 Sunday

Christmas Eve
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

During the season of Advent, we asked 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. It's not too late! Please take an envelope with the amount that you are able to give, print your name on it, and place in the envelope. You can leave the envelope in the offering plate, bring it to the office, or use the QR Code here or on the trunk of the tree to 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 gave 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	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.

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: Isaiah 61:10—62:3; Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40