

KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A CITY-WIDE CHURCH WITH A WORLD-WIDE MINISTRY

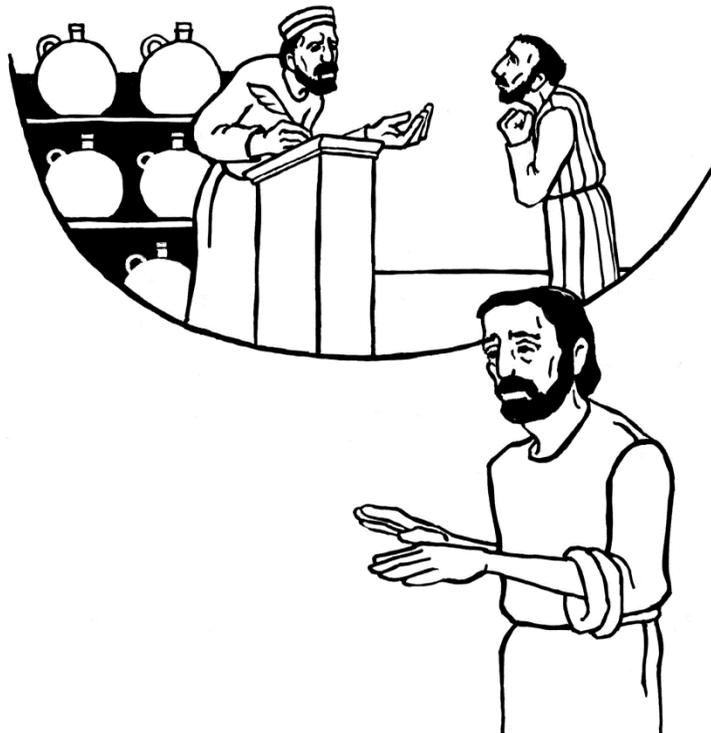
Olaf Roynesdal, Senior Pastor
H. Ashley Hall, Associate Pastor
Inba Inbarasu, Visitation Pastor

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

September 22, 2019

9:00 & 11:00 AM

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST



As we are invited today to consider what it means to be managers (rather than owners) of all that we have, it is crucial to recall that we are brought with a price. “*Christ Jesus, himself human...gave himself a ransom for all.*” Apart from the generosity of God we have nothing—we are nothing. By God’s gracious favor we have everything we need.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(stand)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

- P** Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, Father, † Son and Holy Spirit, the strength of our ancestors, the host of this meal, the builder of the city that is to come.
- G** Amen.
- P** If we have died with Christ, we will also live with Christ. Let us confess our sin to the one who is faithful.

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

- P** God our helper,
- G** we confess the many ways we have failed to live as your disciples.
We have not finished what we began.
We have feasted with friends but ignored strangers.
We have been captivated by our possessions.
Lift our burdens, gracious God.
Refresh our hearts and forgive our sin.
Raise us to the new life you have chosen for us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.
- P** There is rejoicing in heaven when sinners repent. Put trust in these promises: God will never leave you or forsake you. You who were lost have been found. For the sake of † Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Rejoice with the angels at this good news.
- G** Amen.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

“The Church’s One Foundation”

ELW 654

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.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- P** God among us,
C we gather in the name of your Son to learn love for one another. Keep our feet from evil paths. Turn our minds to your wisdom and our hearts to the grace revealed in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING

Amos 8:4-7

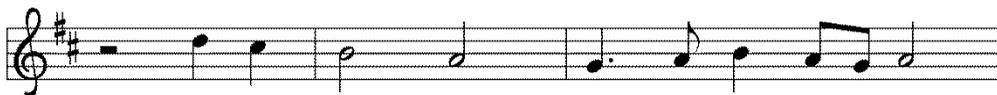
Amos was called by God to prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Peace and prosperity in Israel led to corrupt business practices and oppression of the poor. The prophet declares that God will not tolerate such a situation.

Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land,
⁵saying, “When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, ⁶buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.” ⁷The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?



You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

▣ The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke.

▣ **Glory to you, O Lord!**

HOLY GOSPEL

Luke 16:1-13

Jesus tells the curious story of a dishonest man who cheats his employer and then is commended by him for having acted so shrewdly. Jesus wonders why his own followers are less creative and diligent in their stewardship given that they are managers of a far more valuable household.

Then Jesus said to the disciples, *“There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ ³Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ ⁵So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ ⁷Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.*

¹⁰“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

▣ The Gospel of the Lord.

▣ **Praise to you, O Christ.**

(sit)

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 follow the teacher upstairs for an extended children's sermon (joining us again later in time for Communion) or they may return to their seat and use the Spark Bible and/or activity bags during the regular sermon.

SERMON

Pastor Roynesdal

(stand)

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Be Thou My Vision"

ELW 793

THE APOSTLES' CREED

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

☑ I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

(stand)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Response: 📖 Lord, in your mercy,
 📣 **hear our prayer.**

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

Illness: Richard Bock, Don Burton, Joe Doremus, Rodney Edwards, Rev. Harry Fink, Michael Gonsler, Marvel Green, Eunice Grunberg, Dolores Hiatt, Marcie Lafleur, Joan Nelson, Jean Nippert, Gary Rodene, Stacy Tompkins, Jerry Warner, Ed & Darlene White

Other Prayers: *Those serving in the military* – Anthony Bonacci, Amy Dyer, Brennan Hron, Wyatt Johnson, Michael McNeill, Daniel Milstead, Cody Ray, Sheldon Skovgaard, Michael Vutov, and Joel Woosley

Other Prayers: *Those serving in mission* – Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, India; Dr. Stephen & Jodi Swanson, Tanzania; Rev. Rachel Ringlaben, Argentina; Meghan Brown Saavedra, Mexico; Our sister congregation, the American Church in Berlin; the Wittenberg Center and Dan & Ginny Rath, international translators

WE SHARE GOD’S PEACE

📖 The peace of Christ be with you always.
📣 **And also with you.**

MEAL

(sit)

THE OFFERING IS RECEIVED

We glorify God in our giving. Our offering is an act of worship that makes the ministries of this congregation 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.



MUSICAL OFFERING

“Purify My Heart”

arr. Patrick Tierney

THE TABLE IS PREPARED

(stand)

OFFERTORY HYMN

“Giving God, We Pause and Wonder”

**Giving God, we pause and wonder: What would happen if we tithed —
If we gave our gifts, Creator, Hearts and hands all opened wide?
We might learn, by gladly sharing, Not to trust in things we own
But to risk — it's part of caring — And to trust in you alone.**

**God, we know we cannot pay you For your love in Christ your Son.
Gifts and tithes are just a "thank you" — Ways to pass your blessings on.
We have learned that, in our sharing, We receive more than we give.
By your Spirit, make us daring In this joyful way to live.**

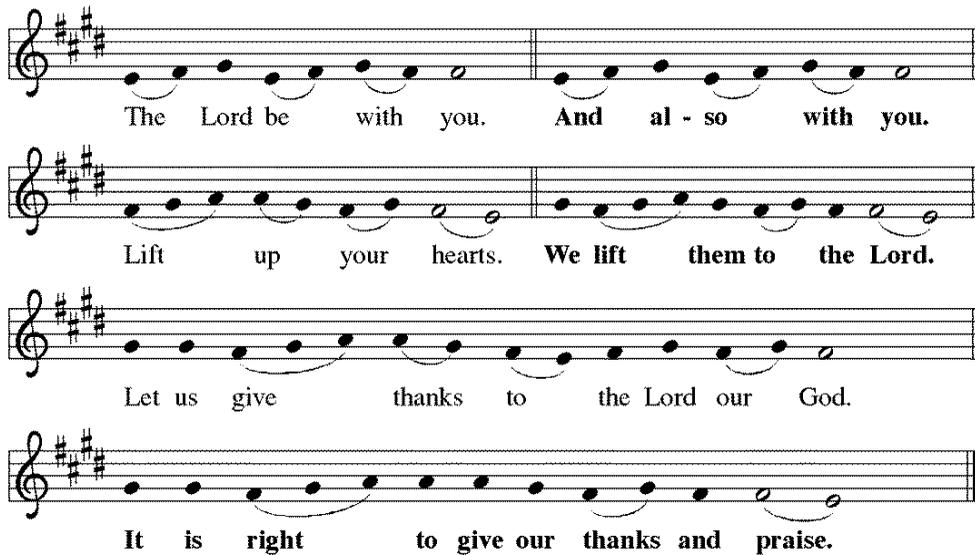
Biblical References: Malachi 3:8-10; Romans 15:25-26; 1 John 4:7-8 Tune: John Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music*, 1813 ("Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing") Text: Copyright © 2005 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved. Copied from *Songs of Grace: New Hymns for God and Neighbor* by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (Upper Room Books, 2009).

OFFERING PRAYER

P God our provider,

C we bring nothing into this world and we can take nothing out of it. Accept the gifts you have first given us, which we bring to your table, and with them the offering of our lives. Nourish us now with the life that really is life, revealed to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

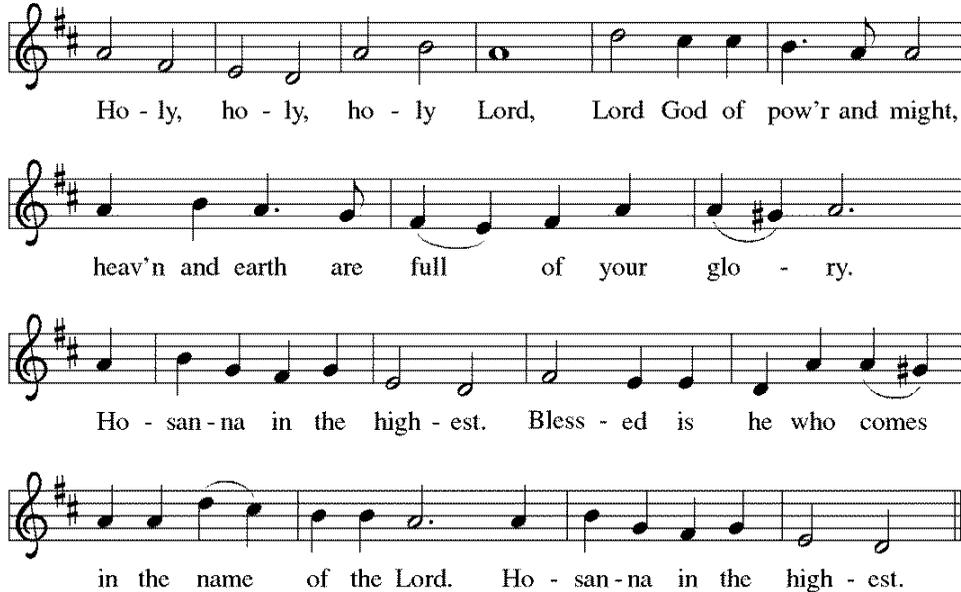
HOLY COMMUNION



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE FOR SUNDAYS

SANCTUS



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

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

☐ Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us all to pray:

☑ **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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

☐ Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them.

☑ **Come, take your place at the feast.**

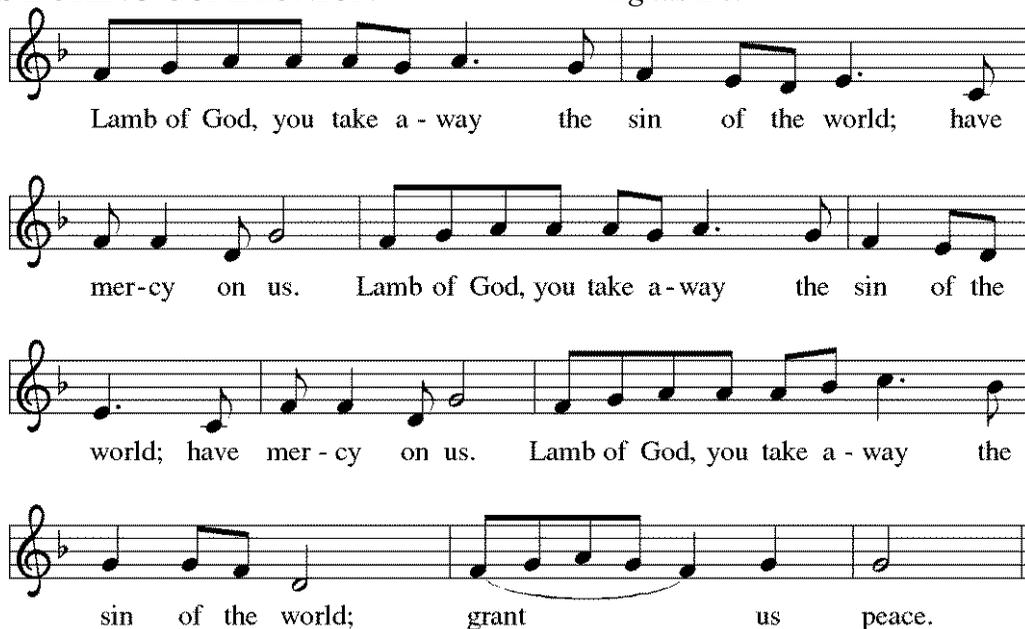
THE DISTRIBUTION

*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 you may then dip it in the wine. Gluten free bread is available; simply request it.*

(sit)

HYMNS DURING COMMUNION

“Agnus Dei”



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

“Blessed Assurance”

ELW 638

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”

ELW 490

(stand)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- P** God of blessing,
- C** at this table we have seen you face to face, and in the gift of Christ’s body and blood, our hearts have been refreshed. Send us now to shine with your goodness and bear witness to the one we have received: Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

- P** Guard the good treasure entrusted in you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in you. Almighty God, Father , † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you with grace, mercy, and peace, now and forever.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

HYMN

“This Is My Father’s World”

ELW 824

DISMISSAL

- P** Go in peace. Live in love as Christ loved us.
G Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

† † †

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KOUNTZE STAFF

Pr. Olaf Roynesdal	Senior Pastor
Pr. Ashley Hall	Associate Pastor
Pr. Inba Inbarasu	Visitation Pastor
Kristin Boe	Christian Ed Coordinator
Debbie Bogue	Office Manager
Sarah Jewell	Administrative Assistant
Noni Cambridge	Staff Treasurer
Judi Boe	Financial Secretary
Jim Smejkal	Bldg. Super./Dir. of Cong. Activities
Søren Johnson	Custodian
Kayla Slaughter	Housekeeper
Barbara Carlsen	Dir. of Music & Fine Arts
Donna Moessner	Dir. of Children's Music
Mark Jones	Organist
David Gerard	Saturday Accompanist
Sheri Lynn Tipton	Night Security Manager
Norma Pafford	Nursery Superintendent
Joyce Palmer	Director of the Weber Clinic
Susann Henry	Food Pantry Director



KOUNTZE

Memorial Lutheran Church

2650 Farnam Street
402-341-7761

Omaha, NE 68131
www.kmlchurch.org

September 21 & 22, 2019

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 Fellowship Hall for more information about who we are and what we do.

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

SATURDAY, 5:00 PM

Lector	Debra Kelly
Ushers	Duane Hovendick Penny Hovendick
Comm. Set-up	Penny Hovendick

SUNDAY, 9:00 AM

Comm. Asst.	Jill Gittler Kevin Larkowski Susie Henry Lowell Harms
Lector	Don Darst
Ushers	Glenn Anderson Dan Collett Ted Kaasch Mark Mahaffey Gary Westerman Bob Woodworth Marcy Madison
Greeters	Karen Wolf Sharon Anderson
Crucifer	Britten Johnson
Acolytes	Rahn Johnson Kaitlyn Munguia

SUNDAY, 11:00 AM

Comm. Asst.	Ashley Sum Deb Hinrichs
Lector	Kevin Larkowski
Ushers	Linda Hoagland Julie O'Doherty
Greeters	Julie King
Crucifer	Charlie Campbell
Acolytes	Hadley Rief Henry Rief

TODAY AT KOUNTZE

KOUNTZE CAFÉ Cookies only this Sunday morning. We won't be serving breakfast but be sure to join us for lunch at the picnic potluck!

ADULT FORUM Join us on Sunday mornings in the Fellowship Hall from 10:10-10:50 AM. **THIS WEEK:** No Forum (Baptism Seminar) **NEXT WEEK:** Congregational Dedication of Weber Clinic

BAPTISM SEMINAR Join Pr. Hall in the Nave at 10:10 AM, this Sunday, September 22. He will introduce parents to the theology of baptism, walk through the baptismal liturgy, discuss scheduling for the baptism, and address any questions you might have.

KOUNTZE MEMORIAL'S "OLD FASHIONED PICNIC/POTLUCK" We're having a picnic and we hope you'll be there! This Sunday, September 22, 12:00 to 3:00 PM in the KMLC green space. A fun time will be had by all!

ETERNAL CANDLE is given to the glory of God in memory of husband, Don Weichert, by Vickie

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES TODAY

JOYFUL SOUNDS CHILDREN'S CHOIR Join us each Sunday from 9-9:30 AM. All children (K-6th grade) who want to praise our Lord by singing, meet in the Joyful Sounds Studio on the 2nd floor.

SUNDAY SCHOOL Join us on Sundays on the 2nd floor for Sunday School. Preschool 1 (2-4 yrs) meets from 9:00—10:00 AM (child care for those too old for the nursery). Sunday School (2 yrs-8th grade) is held from 10:10—10:50 AM.

HIGH SCHOOL FORUM Join us each Sunday in the Youth Center at 10:10 AM.

MS/HS CHOIR REHEARSALS will be held on Sunday mornings, 11:00-11:30 AM in the Adult Choir room. Contact Janet Carlsen Campbell at Janet@kmlchurch.org with questions.

September 22 Sunday

Acceptance of New Confirmands
 7:45 AM & 10:00 AM Adult Choir Rehearsal
 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM No Breakfast—cookies only.
 Join us for lunch at the picnic for a potluck!
 9:00 AM & 11:00 AM Worship
 9:00 AM Nursery (0-2 yrs)
 9:00 AM Joyful Sounds Children's Choir (gr K-6)
 10:10 AM Sunday School (2yr-8th gr)
 10:10 AM Youth Forum (gr 9-12)
 10:10 AM Baptism Seminar (no Adult Forum)
 11:00 AM MS/HS Choir
 12:00 PM KMLC Church Picnic

September 23 Monday

10:00 AM Pantry

September 24 Tuesday

9:00 AM Staff Meeting
 4:30 PM KETV Board
 7:00 PM Circle 3

September 25 Wednesday

12:15 PM Worship

6:00 PM Confirmation Supper

6:30 PM Confirmation Class

7:00 PM Finance Committee

7:30 PM Worship

September 26 Thursday

1:30 PM Circle 4

4:00 PM Healing Gift Free Clinic

6:00 PM Call Committee

September 28 Saturday

5:00 PM Worship

September 29 Sunday

7:45 AM & 10:00 AM Adult Choir Rehearsal

8:00 AM -11:00 AM Breakfast

9:00 AM & 11:00 AM Worship

9:00 AM Nursery (0-2 yrs)

9:00 AM Joyful Sounds Children's Choir (gr K-6)

10:10 AM Sunday School (2yr-8th gr)

10:10 AM Youth Forum (gr 9-12)

11:00 AM MS/HS Choir

12:00 PM Stephen Ministry

12:15 PM New Member Class

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. Instructions will be provided during worship. It is the understanding of the universal Church that those who wish to commune with bread only (especially for health reasons) have communed fully.

CHILDREN IN WORSHIP We believe that all are welcome in worship and encourage families to worship together. Quiet activity bags, children's bibles, and bulletins are available, as well as a Quiet 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 is available from 9 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.

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 card in your bulletin or text your e-mail address to 22828.

NEW MEMBER CLASS If you are interested in joining our congregation, the next class will be Sundays, September 29 & October 6 from 12:15—2:00 PM. Please plan to attend both sessions. Lunch will be served and childcare is provided. New members will be received on October 13. Please indicate your attendance plans on your attendance card or call the church office by September 22 and let us know if you will need childcare when you register.

YESTERDAY'S YOUTH Our most popular program of the year is here! Join us for the Kountze Version of the Antiques Roadshow! Our very own Kountze member, Shayne Fili of Auction Solutions, will be here on Tuesday, October 1, to tell us a thing or two about our treasures! You are welcome to bring an item to learn a bit about it, or just come to enjoy the program. Bring an antique, collectible, or just something of interest! A delicious lunch will be served at noon. The cost is \$4.00. Please RSVP by Friday, September 27 to the church office (402-341-7761). All ages and everyone are welcome!! Don't miss out on this fun and informative event. Any questions please call Sheri Tipton at 402-415-6033. Looking forward to seeing YOU there!

BLESS YOUR BEAST! Join us for the annual “Blessing of the Animals “ held at Saint Cecilia Cathedral (701 N. 40th Street) Saturday, October 5, 2019 . Music and Socializing at 10:30 A.M. Blessing at 11:00 AM. Come early and enjoy the pancake breakfast starting at 9:00 AM. Creatures are welcome! Sponsored by Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church, Saint Cecilia Cathedral, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral

FIRST COMMUNION CLASS Kristin Boe and Pr. Hall will offer a First Communion Class from 12:15-2:00 PM on Sundays, October 6 and 13. We will meet in the Nave and also use the Rotunda. The curriculum will be “Fed & Forgiven.” All ages are welcome; the course is geared toward second graders. Please call the church office to register.

FAMILY & FRIENDS LUNCHEON Sunday, October 6, 12:30 PM. The Social Ministry Committee is hosting a luncheon followed by holy Communion for all homebound members and friends of Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church. We also invite our Eucharistic Ministers to participate. To let us know you plan to come, and if you need a ride, please contact the church office at 402-341-7761 or info@kmlchurch.org.

MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT KOUNTZE Middle Students (Grades 6-8) are invited to a Middle School Retreat at Carol Joy Holling Camp from Friday-Sunday, October 11-13! Come and join us as we dive into this past summer’s theme, “Chain Reaction.” This retreat will serve as a good reminder to campers who attended camp about the things they learned during their time there and how they can continue to implement those lessons into their lives. For campers who may not have been able to attend camp, this retreat will serve as a way for them to experience camp and what we learned this summer in a condensed and meaningful way. Along with the lessons we will learn about God’s love and the chain reaction it causes, we will also experience some favorite camp activities, God’s creation, and of course, fellowship! The cost for the retreat is \$40 per camper. This cost includes lodging, meals and programming on Friday through Sunday. If you are interested in attending please speak with Pastor Olaf or Marcia Roynesdal.

FIRST AID & CPR CLASS Saturday, October 19. All Ushers and Sunday School teachers are encouraged to attend the training and the Church will take care of the registration fee which covers the training materials and certificates. CPR, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Light lunch “Food by Jim” in the link, 12:00 – 12:45 PM. First Aid Training 12:45 – 4:15 PM. All other members of the congregation are invited to take part in the class as well for a small fee of \$20.00. If you attended the CPR training last year, you can attend the first aid training free of charge. Training will take place lower level of the Kountze Commons. Please RSVP to the Church office or you can email jim@kmlchurch.org to reserve your spot.

BIBLE SUNDAY October 20, 9:00 AM Worship Service. Bibles will be presented to children who are 2 and 4 years old, and to children in grades 1, 3, 5, and 7.

ATTENDANCE & GIVING

Saturday Attendance: 40

Sunday Attendance: 9:00: 197 11:00: 113

Midweek - Noon: 10

Total: 360

Pantry Guests Served: 340

Medical Clinic Guests Served: 28

Offering:

\$12,036.79 (Regular) \$1,400.95 (Specials)

\$891 (Phase 2)



KOUNTZE FOOD PANTRY

The Kountze Food Pantry is collecting register receipts from Family Fare stores. For every \$100,000 in receipts returned, Kountze Food Pantry will receive \$1,000. Many people are unaware that the Pantry food is, for the most part, purchased, not donated. One of our

vendors is Family Fare, so your receipts will be added to the Pantry purchases and we can reach \$100,000 in a short time. Please bring receipts to the office or place in receptacle at information desk in the Fellowship Hall.

USHERS NEEDED By warmly and joyfully greeting and seating those in attendance, passing out bulletins, collecting the offering, and assisting with communion, or simply welcoming others, we are blessed to welcome God’s very self. This is the “job description” of an Usher here at Kountze Memorial. We are in need of Ushers at both Sunday services. If you’d like more information or would like to be a part of this ministry, please contact Jim Smejkal at 402-341-7761 or jim@kmlchurch.org. Please consider being a part of this ministry.

Serve God with justice for the poor.

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

Sunday	Luke 16:1-13	Parable of the shrewd manager
Monday	Amos 8:4-7	Judgment on Israel
Tuesday	1 Timothy 2:1-7	Instructions concerning prayer
Wednesday	Deuteronomy 15:7-11	How to treat the poor
Thursday	James 2:14-17	Faith without works is dead
Friday	1 John 3:16-24	Love each other
Saturday	Psalms 113	The Lord helps people in need
Sunday	Luke 16:19-31	Poor Lazarus and the rich man



taking
faith
home

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Written by Pr. Greg Priebbenow and edited by Vibrant Faith Ministries.
Go to www.vibrantfaithathome.org for more faith-forming activities.

No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. Luke 16:13 (NRSV)

A Prayer for the Week:

God of justice for the needy, help us to gladly submit to your reign and your demand for care that raises the poor from the dust. Amen. (Psalm 113:7)

Mealtime Prayer:

For this food and all that you give us, blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore. Amen. (Psalm 113:2)

A Blessing to Give:

May the compassion and justice of God bless you and send you out with peace, love, and mercy.

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

- What is something you have received that you did not earn? Explain.
- How do you feel when someone receives something you do not think they deserve?
- The Bible speaks about justice for the “widow and the orphan,” those without social support in biblical times. Who in our society receives little social support today?

Read: Luke 16:1-13.

In the Bible God requires a justice that shows partiality for the poor, the powerless, the disenfranchised. This understanding of justice is part of the character of God (Isaiah 30:18). As Amos 8 points out, people cheat and “trample on the needy” (v. 4). Such an injustice goes against God and God’s will. It not only hurts individuals, but it hurts the larger society because an unfair economic and social system keeps more people from thriving. The whole of society then suffers. Jesus uses the characteristics of the unjust standards of his day. It would have been assumed that the rich man in the parable charged high interest rates to his customers that the unjust steward simply reduced or erased. Jesus’ point is to commit to divine standards. Be a slave to—submit to—God’s law, God’s ways, God’s justice that will not cave in or back down. It’s not easy and we often fail at it, but with it comes true wisdom—shrewdness, in the language of the parable—and true justice, the kind that God expects, not to earn our salvation, but for the needs of our neighbors.

Pray: Dear God, in the midst of the world’s standards that pursue self-interest, give me faith to trust you and care for others with your compassion and justice, through Christ our Lord, amen.

In Biblical times, widows had very little social support. In modern times, there are more social support networks, but becoming a widow or widower can nonetheless be stressful and lead to loneliness. Do you know of someone who has lost a spouse? Invite that person to your home for a meal or take them out. Take time to listen and give the opportunity to share memories of their loved one. After your time together, keep this person in your prayers.

Paul writes that we should pray for everyone: “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone” (1 Timothy 2:1). Prayer is a faith practice we can do daily. Decorate a small box with stickers, drawings, or with paint/markers. Use index cards or sticky notes to write a prayer each day for someone you either know or have heard or read about. Place the prayers in the box. Take time to review the prayers you have written over time and think about ways the prayers may have been answered.

NEXT WEEK’S READINGS: Amos 6:1a, 4-7; Psalm 146

1 Timothy 6:6-19; Luke 16:19-31