

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

December 22, 2019

9:00 & 11:00 AM

FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT



Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(stand)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the parent who rouses us from slumber, the shepherd who gathers us on the holy mountain, the deliverer who sets us free.

G Amen.

P Let us come before the living God in confession.

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

P As we wait and watch for the promised day of salvation,

G we open our hearts to you, Lord God.

Search us and know us.

Reveal all that we keep inside.

To you, O God, we confess our sins, known and unknown.

Forgive us, renew us, and lead us in your ways of justice and peace.

Make us reflections of the radiant love

of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

P Beloved children of the God, you are gathered before the righteous judge who has mercy on

us. Splash exuberantly in the waters of baptism, where sin is washed away in the river of life.

Dwell peacefully in the loving arms of the one who nurtures all creation. Go forth boldly in the assurance that your sins are forgiven in the name of the one who is coming and is already

here, † Jesus Christ, our Savior.

G Amen.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

ELW 257 vs 1-4

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

- P** Blessed are you, God of hosts, for you promised to send a son, Emmanuel, who brought your presence among us; and you promise through your Son Jesus to save us from our sin. As we light these candles, turn again to us in mercy; strengthen our faith in the word spoken by your prophets; restore us and give us life that we may be saved. O house of David, come,
- C** let us rejoice, for the Son of God, Emmanuel, comes to be with us. Amen.

We light the fourth candle.

HYMN

“Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah”

ELW 240



- 1 Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 3 Light three can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 4 Light four can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra - el, God ful - fills the prom - ise.
He shall feed the flock like a shep - herd, gent - ly lead them home - ward.
Lift your heads and lift high the gate - way for the King of glo - ry.
He is com - ing, tell the glad tid - ings. Let your lights be shin - ing!

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.
- C** And also with you.

KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - va - tion, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace of the whole world, for the well - being of the church of God,



and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this ho - ly house, and for all who of - fer here their wor - ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- ☐ Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come.
- ☑ **With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we will receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD

(sit)

FIRST READING

Isaiah 7:10-16

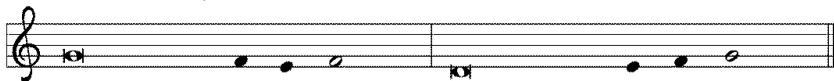
An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!

Ihe Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹²But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. ¹³Then Isaiah said: “*Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.*”

☐ The word of the Lord.

☑ **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19



¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph | like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- | on the cherubim.

²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, | and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and | come to help us.**

³Restore | us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.

⁴**O LORD | God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your | people pray?**

⁵You have fed them with the | bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of | tears to drink.

⁶**You have made us the derision | of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh | us to scorn.**

⁷Restore us, O | God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.

¹⁷**Let your hand be upon the one at | your right hand,
the one you have made so strong | for yourself.**

¹⁸And so will we never turn a- | way from you;
give us life, that we may call up- | on your name.

¹⁹**Restore us, O LORD| God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.**

SECOND READING

Romans 1:1-7

Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

📖 The word of the Lord.

🙏 **Thanks be to God.**

(stand)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

The first line of musical notation consists of a treble and bass staff in G major. The treble staff has a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and then a dotted quarter note on C5. The bass staff provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and a fermata over a G4 note.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!

The second line of musical notation continues the melody from the first line. The treble staff melody starts on G4, moves to A4, B4, and then a dotted quarter note on C5. The bass staff provides harmonic support. The piece ends with a double bar line and a fermata over a G4 note.

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

G Glory to you, O Lord!

HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

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.

☐ 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

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

ELW 257 vs 5-8

THE NICENE CREED

P With the whole church, let us 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.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He 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.

(stand)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Response: **P** Lord, in your mercy,
 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)

Sympathy: to the family and friends of Vera Waterman

Illness: Richard Bock, Joe Bonfante, Don Burton, Joe Doremus, Rodney Edwards, Rev. Harry Fink, Samuel Garrett, Susie Henry, Dolores Hiatt, Rosann Klug, mother of David Klug, Marcie Lafleur, Jean Nippert, Mary Olson, Gary Rodene, Sheri Tipton, Jerry Warner, Ed & Darlene White

Other Prayers: *Those serving in the military* – 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

Other Prayers: *Seminarians*— Adam Klinker, Katie Larson

WE SHARE GOD’S PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.
C 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

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”

arr. Mark Hayes

THE TABLE IS PREPARED

(stand)

OFFERTORY HYMN



1 All earth is hope - ful, the Sav - ior comes at last!
4 We first saw Je - sus a ba - by in a crib.



Fur - rows lie o - pen for God's cre - a - tive task: this, the
This same Lord Je - sus to - day has come to live in our



la - bor of peo - ple who strug - gle to see how
world; he is pres - ent, in neigh - bors we see our



God's truth and jus - tice set ev - 'ry - bod - y free.
Je - sus is with us, and ev - er sets us free.

OFFERING PRAYER

- P** Giver of every good thing,
- C** we set before you the gifts that you have already given to sustain our lives and to share with others. Help us to be good stewards of the earth and all that is in it, and let our lives be a testimony to the abundant feast you prepare for all who hunger. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

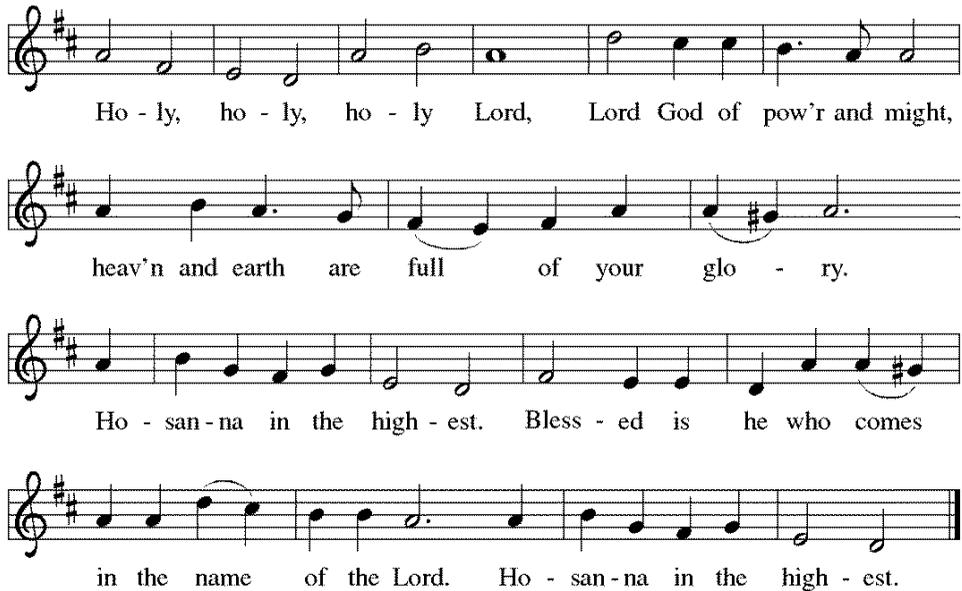
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The image shows four staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. Each staff contains a melody line with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: '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.', and 'It is right to give our thanks and praise.' The music consists of quarter and eighth notes with slurs.

PREFACE FOR ADVENT

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

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

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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Come now with joy to Emmanuel's table.

C Feast at the banquet of hope and love.

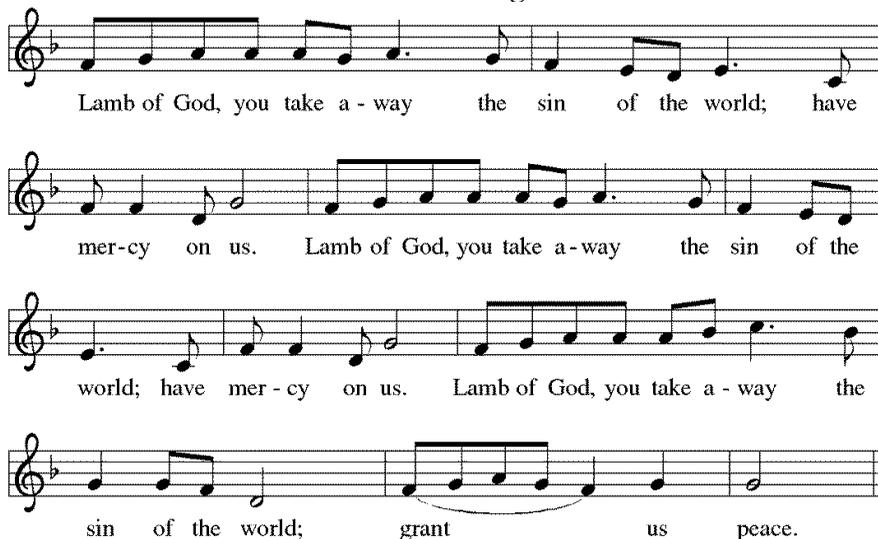
THE DISTRIBUTION

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.

"Savior of the Nations, Come"

"The King Shall Come"

ELW 263

ELW 260

(stand)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- P** God of abundance,
- C** we give you thanks that in this holy meal you have invited us to feast with you and one another. May the taste of your love remain with us, and may our words and our work in your name invite others into your bountiful grace. Send us from your table to proclaim your presence, even as we await the glorious coming of Christ our Savior. Amen.

SENDING

(sit)

BLESSING

- ☞ May God, who gathers us in love, lead you in pathways of righteousness and justice. May God, who knows us more deeply than we know ourselves, lead you in pathways of forgiveness and freedom. May God, who fills us with good things, lead you in pathways of equity and abundance. The blessing of the holy Trinity, one God, the Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you forever.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

HYMN

“Soon and Very Soon”

ELW 439

DISMISSAL

- ☞ Go in peace. Christ is with you.
☛ **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 Slight	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

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.	Lorie Groenjes Kevin Larkowski Liz Pemberton Jerry Clanton
Lector	Robin Perkins
Ushers	Bob Woodworth Glenn Anderson Dan Collett Marcy Madison Mark Mahaffey Gary Westerman Ted Kaasch
Greeters	Sharon Anderson Karen Wolf
Crucifer	John Groenjes
Acolytes	Dannika Rees Kaitlyn Munguia

SUNDAY, 11:00 AM

Comm. Asst.	Deb Hinrichs Lowell Harms
Lector	Stephen Urlaub
Ushers	Linda Hoagland Ken Johnson Lee Johnson Norm Sack
Greeters	Julie King
Crucifer	Charlie Campbell
Acolytes	Hadley Rief Henry Rief



KOUNTZE

Memorial Lutheran Church

2650 Farnam Street
402-341-7761

Omaha, NE 68131
www.kmlchurch.org

December 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.

TODAY AT KOUNTZE

KOUNTZE CAFÉ Join us for a hot breakfast buffet served from 8:00-11:00 AM prepared by Jim West and the kitchen crew. The suggested donation for the hot breakfast is \$5 adults, \$2.50 children 12 and younger.

ADULT FORUM Join us on Sunday mornings in the Fellowship Hall from 10:10-10:50 AM. **THIS WEEK:** Christmas Worship Preview **NEXT WEEK:** No Forum (Fellowship time)

ALTERNATIVE GIFTS This is the last Sunday to check out the Alternate Gift insert that is in your bulletin this weekend. Find a cause or organization that would be the best gift for your friends and family.

ALTAR FLOWERS are given to the glory of God in honor of Lee & Jean Johnson's wedding anniversary

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES TODAY

JOYFUL SOUNDS CHILDREN'S CHOIR, SUNDAY SCHOOL, AND HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH FORUM

December 22:	Christmas Celebration
No Sunday School:	December 29 & January 5
January 12:	Sunday School & HS Forum resumes

December 22 Sunday

7:45 AM & 10:00 AM Adult Choir
 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM Breakfast
 9:00 AM & 11:00 AM Worship
 9:00 AM Nursery (0-2 yrs)
 10:10 AM Youth Forum (gr 9-12)
 10:10 AM Adult Forum
 10:10 AM Sunday School Christmas Celebration
 (2yr-8th gr)
 12:00 PM Stephen Ministry

December 23 Monday

10:00 AM Pantry

December 24 Tuesday

Christmas Eve
 OFFICE CLOSED (at noon)
 4:00 PM Worship
 7:00 PM Worship—candlelight
 11:00 PM Worship—candlelight

December 25 Wednesday

Christmas Day
 OFFICE CLOSED
 10:00 AM Worship

December 26 Thursday

OFFICE CLOSED

December 27 Friday

5:00 PM Wedding Rehearsal

December 28 Saturday

2:30 PM Galucia/Day Wedding
 5:00 PM Worship

December 29 Sunday

No Sunday School
 7:45 AM & 10:00 AM Adult Choir
 8:00 AM -11:00 AM Continental Breakfast
 9:00 AM & 11:00 AM Worship
 9:00 AM Nursery (0-2 yrs)
 10:10 AM Adult Forum - Fellowship

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, January 19 & 26, 2020, 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 February 2. Please indicate your attendance plans on your attendance card or call the church office by January 12 and let us know if you will need childcare when you

KOUNTZE FOOD PANTRY Thank you so very much to all who contributed to the holiday bag giveaway for the Kountze food pantry! It was a very successful event thanks to your generosity! Looking forward, the food pantry is in need of canned fruit. This is a major expense every week, and it is also the favorite category of our guests. We do like to spread a little joy where we can!

SIMPLY GIVING Just a reminder - if you give your offering automatically through Simply Giving, please remember if there are any changes to be made, whether increasing, decreasing, or stopping the automatic giving, you need to indicate this change to the office or the withdrawals will continue as they are currently set up. Please send an email to noni@kmlchurch.org or complete a new Simply Giving form and turn it into the office so we can make those changes. **If you would like more info. on Simply Giving**, you can pick up a form at the Welcome Desk or call the office.

PARKING... On a regular basis we run out of handicapped parking spaces on Sunday mornings. In order to ease this situation, please use the east parking lot (by the handicapped entrance) only if you have a mobility issue. Those who are physically able are asked to use the west parking lot. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

CJH CAMP EARLY BIRD SAVINGS! Register for CJH Camp before January 31, 2019 and get \$50 off a full-week session and a drawstring bag! You can register online at <https://www.caroljoyholling.org/register>.



Dorothy Stanzel will have her 90th birthday on Tuesday, December 17.



If you would like to send Dorothy a birthday card, please send it to:

Mrs Dorothy Stanzel
5015 S 190th Ave
Omaha NE 68135



ATTENDANCE & GIVING

Saturday Attendance: 258
Sunday Attendance: 9:00: 253 11:00: 63
Midweek - Noon: 26 **Evening:** 53
Total: 653
Pantry Guests Served: 354
Medical Clinic Guests Served: 37
Offering:
\$13,133.64 (Regular) \$8,978.94 (Specials)
\$1,340.96 (Phase 2)



All financial gifts to Kountze Memorial need to be in the church office by noon on December 31, 2019 or postmarked no later than that date. Thank you.

Advent is the season of love.

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



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Go to www.vibrantfaithathome.org for more faith-forming activities.

Sunday	Matthew 1:18-25	God is with us
Monday	Isaiah 7:10-16	A son named Immanuel
Tuesday	Luke 2:1-20	The birth of Jesus
Wednesday	John 1:1-14	The Word became flesh
Thursday	Isaiah 9:2-7	A child is born
Friday	Romans 1:1-17	A salutation
Saturday	Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19	Israel's restoration
Sunday	Matthew 2:13-23	The escape to Egypt

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” **Matthew 1:23 (NRSV)**

A Prayer for the Week:

Almighty and everlasting God, may the birth of Jesus remind us of your promise of salvation and lead us to trust in you and to serve and love others with thankful hearts. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, may this food give strength to our bodies and faith, hope, and love to our souls. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ fill you with grace and peace. (Romans 1:7)

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

- How would you describe love?
- How has someone shown love to you?
- How does the birth of Jesus show the love of God for all the world?

Read: Romans 1:1-7.

The birth of Jesus is not about the sweet presence of a smiling baby. It is about the work of God to save the world by entering our experience and being with us (Matthew 1:23). Ours is the God who promised this beforehand through the prophets (Romans 1:2), who has come in the flesh in the line of King David (v. 3), who rose from the dead and is recognized as the Son of God (v. 4). We are the beloved of God and named holy (v. 7). With the birth of Jesus comes the fulfillment of God's activity to change the world from darkness and despair to a heralding of good news for all the world. It includes a divine assignment to reach all people with the love of God. That is what Advent, Christmas, and the Christian faith is all about. How is this kind of love more of an action than a feeling?

Pray: **Dear God, we thank you for entering our world and our lives with hope and love. Help us to love the world you love in the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

“God with us” (Matthew 1:23b) became a reality when a baby, Jesus, was born. The prophet Isaiah told of the Lord sending a sign, a child (Isaiah 7:14). God's saving work came to us through the birth of a child. Around the world there are many organizations and hospitals who help children in need of healthcare and food. Think of ways you can help children in need to know that God is with them through your support and donations.

This week we light four candles on the Advent wreath. They are the candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Emmanuel means God is with us. God showed love for us by sending Jesus to be with us. During this Advent season we pray for the hope, peace, joy, and love of God through Jesus Christ.

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148
Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23