

# KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

## A CITY-WIDE CHURCH WITH A WORLD-WIDE MINISTRY

Olaf Roynesdal, Senior Pastor  
H. Ashley Hall, Associate Pastor  
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2650 Farnam Street  
Omaha, NE 68131-3616  
402-341-7761  
[www.kmlchurch.org](http://www.kmlchurch.org)

July 12, 2020

9:00 AM

SIXTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST



*God's word is like the rain that waters the earth and brings forth vegetation. It is also like the sower who scatters seed indiscriminately. Our lives are like seeds sown in the earth. Even from what appears to be little, dormant, or dead, God promises a harvest. At the Lord's table we are fed with the bread of life, that we may bear fruit in the world.*

# GATHERING

## PRELUDE

*Mark Jones, Organist*

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*(stand)*

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

**P** Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, Father, Son  $\text{✝}$  and Holy Spirit, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

**C** Amen.

**P** Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.*

**P** Reconciling God,

**C** we confess that we do not trust your abundance,  
and we deny your presence in our lives.

We place our hope in ourselves  
and rely on our own efforts.

We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.

We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.

We fear difference and do not welcome others  
as you have welcomed us.

We sin in thought, word, and deed.

By your grace, forgive us;

through your love, renew us;

and in your Spirit, lead us;

so that we will live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.

**P** Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through  $\text{✝}$  Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**1** We plow the fields and scatter  
the good seed on the land,  
but it is fed and watered  
by God's almighty hand,  
who sends the snow in winter,  
the warmth to swell the grain,  
the breezes and the sunshine,  
and soft refreshing rain.

*Refrain*

All good gifts around us  
are sent from heav'n above.  
We thank you, Lord,  
we thank you, Lord,  
for all your love.

**2** You only are the maker  
of all things near and far.  
You paint the wayside flower,  
you light the evening star.  
The winds and waves obey you,  
by you the birds are fed;  
much more to us, your children,  
you give our daily bread. *Refrain*

**3** We thank you, our creator,  
for all things bright and good,  
the seedtime and the harvest,  
our life, our health, our food.  
No gifts have we to offer  
for all your love imparts,  
but what you most would treasure—  
our humble, thankful hearts. *Refrain*

Text: Matthias Claudius, 1740-1815; tr. Jane M. Campbell, 1817-1878, alt.

## 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.

## HYMN OF PRAISE

*Refrain*

**This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,**

- 1** Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. ☒
- 2** Power, riches, wisdom, and strength, and honor, blessing, and glory are his. ☒
- 3** Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation:  
Blessing, honor, glory, and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. ☒
- 4** For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia. ☒

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

- ☐ Almighty God,
- ☑ we thank you for planting in us the seed of your word. By your Holy Spirit help us to receive it with joy, live according to it, and grow in faith and hope and love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

# WORD

(sit)

## FIRST READING

Isaiah 55:10-13

*God's word to Israel's exiles is as sure and effective as never-failing precipitation. Their return to the Holy Land in a new exodus is cheered on by singing mountains and by trees that clap their hands.*

**F**or as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

<sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

<sup>12</sup>For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

<sup>13</sup>Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

☒ The word of the Lord.

☑ Thanks be to God.

## PSALM 65:1-13 (*read responsively*)

<sup>1</sup>You are to be praised, O God, in Zion;  
to you shall vows be fulfilled.

<sup>2</sup>**To you, the one who answers prayer,  
to you all flesh shall come.**

<sup>3</sup>Our sins are stronger than we are,  
but you blot out our transgressions.

<sup>4</sup>**Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there!  
They will be satisfied by the beauty of your house, by the holiness of your temple.**

<sup>5</sup>Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation,  
O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the oceans far away.

<sup>6</sup>**You make firm the mountains by your power;  
you are girded about with might.**

<sup>7</sup>You still the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves, and the clamor of the peoples.

<sup>8</sup>**Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvelous signs;  
you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.**

<sup>9</sup>You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous;  
the river of God is full of water.

You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth.

<sup>10</sup>**You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges;  
with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.**

<sup>11</sup>You crown the year with your goodness,  
and your paths overflow with plenty.

<sup>12</sup>**May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing,  
and the hills be clothed with joy.**

<sup>13</sup>May the meadows cover themselves with flocks.  
and the valleys cloak themselves with grain;

**let them shout for joy and sing.**

## SECOND READING

Romans 8:1-11

*There is no condemnation for those who live in Christ. God sent Christ to accomplish what the law was unable to do: condemn sin and free us from its death-dealing ways. The Spirit now empowers proper actions and values in our lives and gives us the promise of resurrected life.*

**T**here is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup>For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

☒ The word of the Lord.

☑ Thanks be to God.

(stand)

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



☐ The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

☑ Glory to you, O Lord!

## HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

*In Matthew's gospel, both Jesus and his disciples "sow the seed" of God's word by proclaiming the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near." Now, in a memorable parable, Jesus explains why this good news produces different results in those who hear.*

**T**hat same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup>Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup>Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, they were

scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup>Let anyone with ears listen! . . .

<sup>18</sup>“Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. <sup>20</sup>As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup>yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. <sup>22</sup>As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. <sup>23</sup>But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

☞ The Gospel of the Lord.

☞ Praise to you, O Christ.

(sit)

### **CHILDREN’S BLESSING (9:00 AM)**

*Children (aged 3 years through 5<sup>th</sup> 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**

“As Rain from the Clouds”

**ELW 508**

- 1 As rain from the clouds will your word come to earth,  
as snow from the heavens refreshing the land.  
Then soften our soil that the good seed may grow  
and ripen rich fruit to return to your hand.  
We praise you, our God, for the dew of your word;  
we thank you, good gard'ner, for your tender toil.  
We bless you, best farmer, for hundredfold yield,  
for harvest of grace in our once-barren soil.**
  
- 2 As grain that is scattered your word has been sown  
on rocks and on roadways, in good earth and sand.  
Make fertile our soil that the good seed may grow  
and ripen rich fruit to return to your hand.  
We praise you, our God, for the seed of your word;  
we thank you, good gard'ner, for your tender toil.  
We bless you, best farmer, for hundredfold yield,  
for harvest of grace in our once-barren soil.**

**3 As rays of the sun shall your word light the world,  
awaking and warming and healing our land.  
Then shine in our hearts that the good seed may grow  
and ripen rich fruit to return to your hand.  
We praise you, our God, for the light of your word;  
we thank you, good gard'ner, for your tender toil.  
We bless you, best farmer, for hundredfold yield,  
for harvest of grace in our once-barren soil.**

Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939  
Text © 1983, 2003 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638.  
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## **THE APOSTLES' CREED**

- P** With the whole church, let us confess our faith.
- C** **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.**

## **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)*

**Illness:** Christine Bachman, sister of John Natvig, Richard Bock, Lois Carlsen, Carol Coffey, Don Burton, Joe Doremus, Rodney Edwards, Samuel Garrett, Sherry Henneman, mother of Scott Henneman, Dolores Hiatt, Beth & Richard Holzer, family of James Holzer, Renee Johnshon, daughter-in-law of Ken & Linda Johnson,

Roseann Klug, mother of David Klug, Marcie Lafleur, Joan Nelson, Gary Rodene, Vinn Stephens, Sheri Tipton, Ed & Darlene White, Kimberly Wilson, Joanne Worm

**Other Prayers:** *Those serving in the military*—Amy Dyer, Brennan Hron, Wyatt Johnson, 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; 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, Justin Perkins

## WE SHARE GOD’S PEACE

☐ The peace of Christ be with you always.

☑ **And also with you.**

*As we share the peace today – and you do so in your home – You are invited you to contact a fellow member by phone, email or letter. You can do that today or any time during the week. Pick someone from the church directory. We could email each other or call each other during this time when we cannot meet. Then each week select another person to contact. Try to make it someone you don’t really know and get acquainted with them. Always be sure to leave your address, email, and phone number on your message in case they do not have a directory. Talk to people you know and get the names and addresses of those who might not have directories and try to contact them. By the time we meet again we will have made many new friends.*

## MEAL

(sit)

### THE OFFERING IS RECEIVED

*Please Support the overall ministry of Kountze Memorial during these difficult times. If you are able, please mail in your offering or donate on-line. Thank you!*



### OFFERTORY ANTHEM

*“How Great Thou Art”*

*arr. Stuart Hine  
Curt Johnson, soloist*

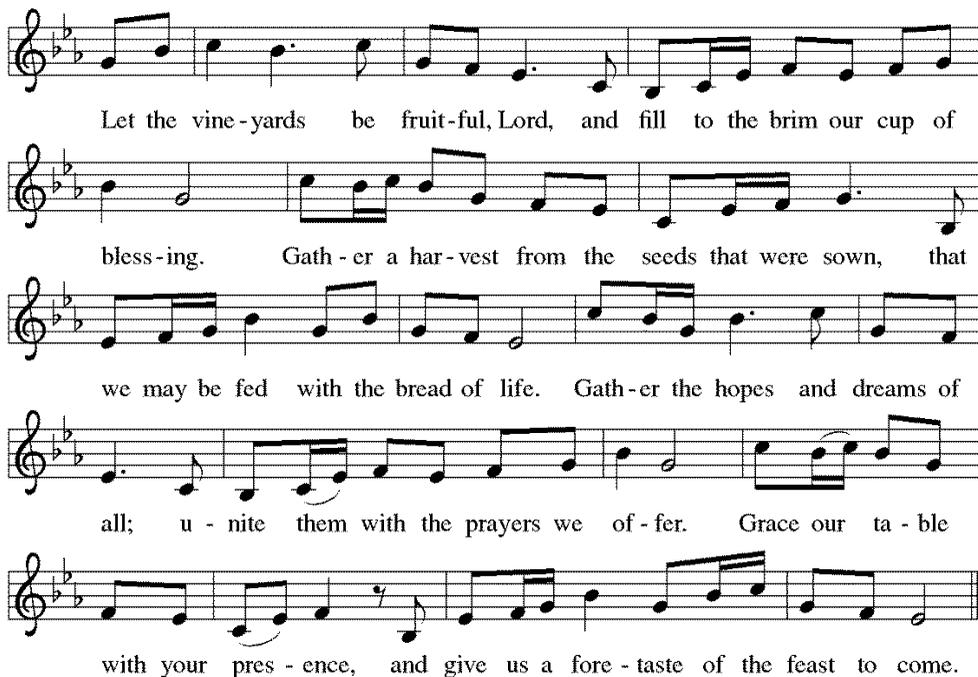
### THE TABLE IS PREPARED

(stand)

## OFFERTORY HYMN

*“Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful”*

ELW 184



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that  
we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of  
all; u-nite them with the prayers we of-fer. Grace our ta-ble  
with your pres-ence, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

## OFFERING PRAYER

- P** God of goodness and growth,
- C** all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we will proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. Amen.

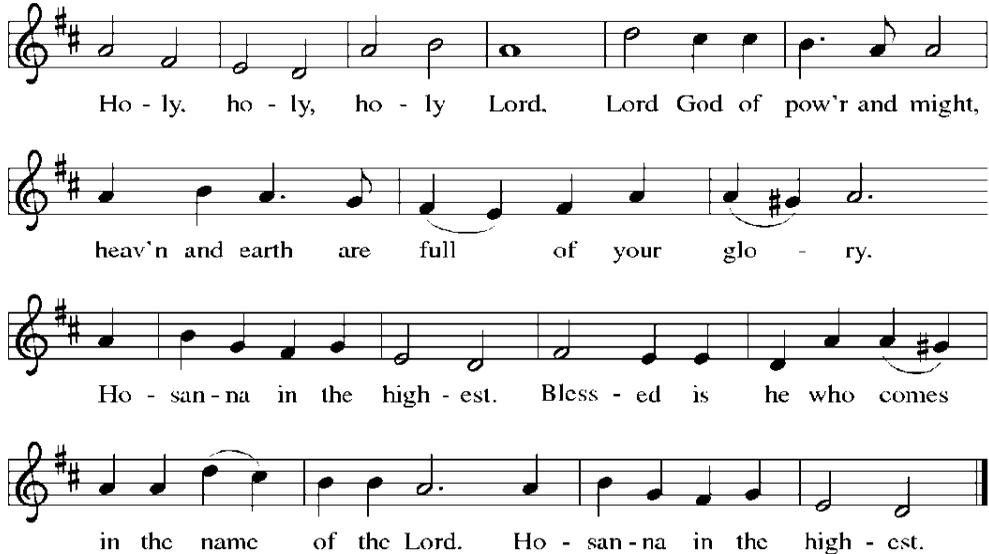
## HOLY COMMUNION

- 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 our God.
- C** It is right to give our thanks and praise.

## PREFACE FOR TIME AFTER PENTECOST

- ☐ It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you,  
almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ;  
who on this day overcame death and the grave,  
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.  
And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## 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

- ☐ Friends of Jesus, come to his table.
- ☑ We receive nourishment for our journey.

(sit)

## 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, grant us peace.

## COMMUNION HYMN

*“Around You, O Lord Jesus”*

ELW 468

- 1 Around you, O Lord Jesus,  
your own you gather still  
to share the feast you give us  
with grace our lives to fill.  
You say to us so lovingly,  
“Take, eat! This is my body!  
Take, drink! This is my blood!”
- 2 We hear your invitation,  
and heed, O Lord, your call;  
your word of consolation  
is spoken here to all.  
It draws us to your loving heart;  
it brings to us your blessing,  
which never will depart.
- 3 We are your own forever;  
until our final breath  
we will be true and never  
in joy, in grief, in death  
depart from you, for you are still  
among your people dwelling,  
as you have said you will.

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772-1847; tr. composite  
Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

(stand)

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- ☞ God of the welcome table,  
☛ **in this meal we have feasted on your goodness and have been united by your presence among us. Empower us to go forth sustained by these gifts so that we may share your neighborly love with all, through Jesus Christ, the giver of abundant life. Amen.**

## SENDING

### BLESSING

- ☞ Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Almighty God, Father, Son ✠, and Holy Spirit bless you now and keep you in eternal love.

### THREE-FOLD AMEN

### HYMN

*“On What Has Now Been Sown”*

**ELW 550**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>1 On what has now been sown<br/>your blessing, Lord, bestow;<br/>the pow'r is yours alone<br/>to make it sprout and grow.<br/>O Lord, in grace the harvest raise,<br/>and yours alone shall be the praise!</b></p> | <p><b>2 To you our wants are known,<br/>from you are all our pow'rs;<br/>accept what is your own<br/>and pardon what is ours.<br/>Our praises, Lord, and prayers receive<br/>and to your word a blessing give.</b></p> |
| <p><b>3 Oh, grant that each of us,<br/>now met before you here,<br/>may meet together thus<br/>when you and yours appear,<br/>and follow you to heav'n, our home.<br/>E'en so, Amen! Lord Jesus, come!</b></p>           |  |

Text: John Newton, 1725-1807, alt.

### DISMISSAL

- ☞ Go in peace. Jesus Christ is with you always.  
☛ **Thanks be to God.**

### POSTLUDE

✠ ✠ ✠

*Mark Jones, Organist*

## Special Notice

Beginning Sunday, July 19, you may attend Worship in person by confirmed reservation only (call/e-mail no later than noon on Thursday before the Sunday you want to attend). Please note that the plans set forth are subject to immediate change. You may still join us for Worship on Cox channel 13 or live streamed at <https://www.kmlchurch.org/live-streaming/>



# KOUNTZE

Memorial Lutheran Church

2650 Farnam Street  
402-341-7761

Omaha, NE 68131  
[www.kmlchurch.org](http://www.kmlchurch.org)

July 12, 2020

**Kountze Food Pantry Volunteers**  
**Mondays, 7:30 - 9:00 AM; 9:00 - 11:00 AM;**  
**11:00 AM - 1:00 PM**  
**Fridays, 5:00 - 7:00 PM**

The Kountze Food Pantry will continue to operate out of the garage door at least until July 31<sup>st</sup>. We believe the open air environment is better to protect volunteers and guests from the virus. We will reevaluate at that time. We are seeing an upward trend in numbers of guests at the pantry. Fortunately, the Food Bank for the Heartland received a large influx of donations, and is temporarily providing food to Kountze for free, or mostly free, since April 28th. We also received \$3,175.00 during the Omaha Gives event. As always, the Pantry is in need of toilet tissue. If you can donate a package or two, it will be greatly appreciated! When volunteering, please sign up for available slots at the link below.

<https://form.jotform.com/200834787701155>



## Attendance and Giving

**Online Attendance:** 173

**9:00 AM Attendance:** (Reservation Only) 45

**Pantry Guests Served:** 358

**Medical Clinic Guests Served:** 28

**Offering:**

\$16,454.04 (Regular)      \$4,409.48 (Specials)

\$912.00 (Phase 2)



**Saturday, July 25**  
**Carol Joy Holling Camp Quilt Auction**

More info at: [CHJCenter.org/quilt-auction](http://CHJCenter.org/quilt-auction)

**CJH Camp Classic**

**Friday, August 21—Kearney, NE**

**Friday, September 25—Carol Joy Holling**

Register at: [cjhcenter.org/upcoming-retreats](http://cjhcenter.org/upcoming-retreats)

**Rally Day**

**Sunday, August 23**

## Today at Kountze

**Altar Flowers** are given to the glory of God in honor of Bill & Madaline Christensen's 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary; in honor of Marvin & Kris Olson's wedding anniversary; in memory of Bill & Marjorie Sears from their children, Ron, Lois, and Claude.

**Television Ministry** our television broadcast this Sunday is sponsored to the glory of God by Mary Olson

**Sunday School**

Each Sunday I will post a video of the Children's sermon on the KMLC Parent Group Facebook Page. In addition, I will be providing some printable activities that relate to the lesson. Take a picture of your child's work and post it in the comments. Let's stay as connected as possible while we can't gather together. Stay tuned for more fun activities!

In Peace,

Kristin

## God delivers abundant harvests.

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

Sunday	Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23	Parable of the sower
Monday	Romans 8:1-11	Life in the Spirit
Tuesday	Isaiah 55:10-13	God's word is powerful
Wednesday	Psalms 119:105-112	Light from the Lord's law
Thursday	Genesis 25:19-34	Esau and Jacob
Friday	2 Corinthians 9:6-15	Give with generosity
Saturday	Psalms 65:1-13	Thanksgiving for earth's bounty
Sunday	Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43	Parable of the weeds



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Go to [www.vibrantfaithathome.org](http://www.vibrantfaithathome.org) for more faith-forming activities.

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas. **Psalm 65:5 (NRSV)**

### A Prayer for the Week:

God of abundant grace and mercy, help us to receive your word of life that we may be your good soil to grow in faith and share your word with others. Amen.

### Mealtime Prayer:

God of abundant harvests, we thank you for your eternal care that blesses us with daily food through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### A Blessing to Give:

Through the Spirit of Christ, may you go out in joy, and be led back in peace. (Isaiah 55:12)

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

- Do you talk about your faith as part of daily conversations? Why or why not?
- Have you ever planted a garden? If so, what was it like?
- How does God's word get planted into your life like a seed planted into good soil?

*Read:* Isaiah 55:10-13.

Yes, we have an awesome God, as noted in Psalm 65:5. In Isaiah 55 that awesomeness is expressed through God's word that is powerful. It does what God intends. It is productive. Isaiah 55 announces the return from exile for God's people. God's word, God's will shall accomplish it. This text is often used at the ordination of a pastor or a deacon. However, could we not also use it at weddings, baptisms, and any other occasion that celebrates God's people living together in faith, hope, and love? God's word is given for all of us to speak aloud to one another for our encouragement and growth in life and faith. God's word at a meal creates thankful hearts for the abundance of God's love with daily food. God's word at morning, evening, or at bedtime reminds us of the eternal care of God as those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells and for whom there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1 and 11). Let's be wasteful as we cast God's word into all the corners of the earth, landing on all kinds of soil that God's word may sprout and produce an abundant harvest (Matthew 13:23). Who has blessed you with God's word recently? How did it impact your life?

*Pray:* **Creative God, may the Spirit of Christ create in me the good soil to receive your word and grow in grace. Amen.**

Plants of the earth not only serve as metaphors for the kingdom of God, but of God's life sustaining work in creation. Join a community garden, plant a garden in your own yard, or find a way to support the vital work of local farmers.

"But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields" (Matthew 13:23a). Take a sheet of paper and write "Good Soil" across the bottom. Draw a fruit tree with a trunk, leaves, and fruit. On each drawing of fruit, write different ways you show God's love to others. Read what you have written and think or talk about how your "fruits" help you and others grow in their faith.

**NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:** Isaiah 44:6-8; Psalm 86:11-17  
Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43