

KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A CITY-WIDE CHURCH WITH A WORLD-WIDE MINISTRY

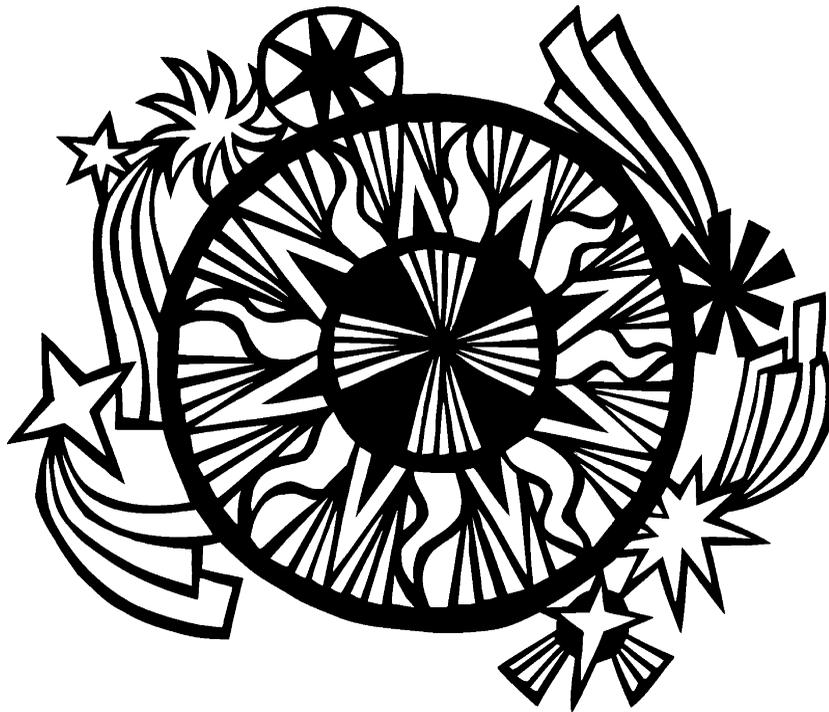
Olaf Roynesdal, Senior Pastor
H. Ashley Hall, Associate Pastor
Shari Duminy, Associate Pastor
Inba Inbarasu, Visitation Pastor

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

January 3, 2021

9:00 AM

SECOND SUNDAY of CHRISTMAS



Within the gospel reading's profound words lies the simple message that God is revealed in a human person. Though we may try to understand how the Word existed with God from the beginning of time, the wonder we celebrate at Christmas is that the Word continues to dwell among us. Christ comes among us in the gathered assembly, the scriptures, the waters of new birth, and the bread and the wine. Through these ordinary gifts we receive the fullness of God's grace and truth.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

Mark Jones, organ

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(stand)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who was in the beginning, who makes a dwelling among us, who covers us with justice and mercy.

C Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

P God of goodness and lovingkindness,

C we confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbors.

We have turned away from your invitation to new life.

We have turned away from the lowly and downtrodden.

In your abundant mercy, forgive us our sins,

those we know and those known only to you,

for the sake of the one who came to live among us,

Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

P Hear the good news of peace and salvation! God forgives us all our sins, not through our own work, but through † Jesus Christ, made known to all people. With all who come to the manger, rejoice in this amazing gift of grace.

C Amen.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

“The Bells of Christmas”

ELW 298 vs. 1-4

1 The bells of Christmas chime once more;
the heav'nly guest is at the door.
He comes to earthly dwellings still
with new year gifts of peace, good will.

2 This world, though wide and far outspread,
could scarcely find for you a bed.
Your cradle was a manger stall,
no pearl nor silk nor kingly hall.

3 Now let us go with quiet mind,
the swaddled babe with shepherds find,
to gaze on him who gladdens them,
the loveliest flow'r of Jesse's stem.

4 Oh, join with me, in gladness sing,
to keep our Christmas with our king,
until our song, from loving souls,
like rushing mighty water rolls!

Text: Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig, 1783-1872;
tr. Charles Porterfield Krauth, 1823-1883, 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

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

ELW 289 vs. 1&3

1 Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.
**Gloria in excelsis Deo;
gloria in excelsis Deo.**

3 Come to Bethlehem and see
him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn king.
**Gloria in excelsis Deo;
gloria in excelsis Deo.**

Text: French carol; tr. H. F. Hemy,
The Crown of Jesus Music, 1864

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.

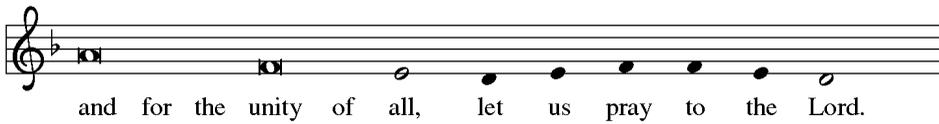


Lord, have mer - cy.

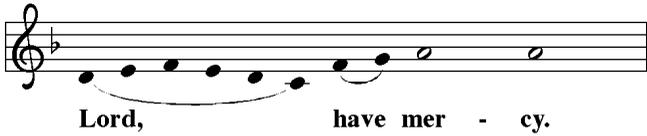


For the peace of the whole world, for the well - being of the church of God,

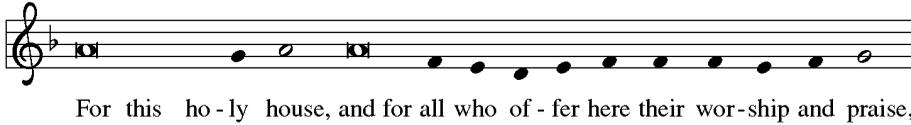
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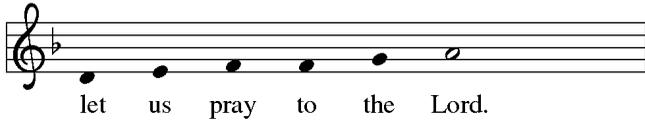
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



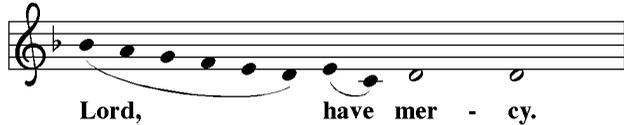
Lord, have mer - cy.



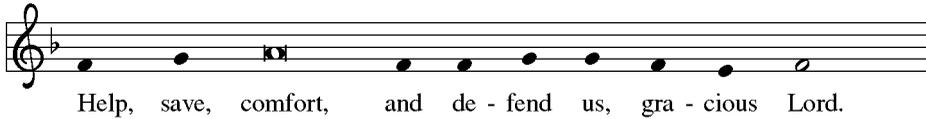
For this ho - ly house, and for all who of - fer here their wor-ship and praise,



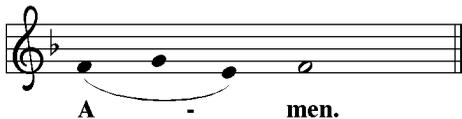
let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



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



A - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- ☐ Almighty God,
- ☑ you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WORD

(sit)

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 31:7-14

God promises to bring Israel back to its land from the most remote parts of exile. In Zion Israel will rejoice over God's gifts of food and livestock. Young women will express their joy in dancing; God will give gladness instead of sorrow.

For thus says the LORD: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, "Save, O LORD, your people, the remnant of Israel." ⁸See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. ⁹With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. ¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock." ¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. ¹²They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. ¹³Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. ¹⁴I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the LORD.

☐ The word of the Lord.

☑ Thanks be to God.

PSALM 147:12-20 (read responsively)

¹²Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem;
praise your God, O Zion,

¹³**who has strengthened the bars of your gates
and has blessed your children within you.**

¹⁴God has established peace on your borders;
and satisfies you with the finest wheat.

¹⁵**God sends out a command to the earth,
a word that runs very swiftly.**

¹⁶God gives snow like wool, scattering frost like ashes.

¹⁷**God scatters hail like bread crumbs.**

Who can stand against God's cold?

¹⁸The LORD sends forth the word and melts them;
the wind blows, and the waters flow.

¹⁹**God declares the word to Jacob, statutes and judgments to Israel.**

²⁰The LORD has not done so to any other nation;

they do not know God's judgments. Hallelujah!

THE SECOND READING

Ephesians 1:3-14

In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

L The word of the Lord.

G Thanks be to God

(stand)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



P The Holy Gospel according to St. John.

G Glory to you, O Lord!

HOLY GOSPEL

John 1:1-18

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

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "*This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'*") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

P The Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

(sit)

CHILDREN'S BLESSING

SERMON

Pastor Roynesdal

(stand)

HYMN OF THE DAY

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

ELW 294



1 In the bleak mid - win - ter, frost - y wind made moan,
2 Heav - en can - not hold him, nor . . . earth sus - tain;
3 What . . . can I give him, poor . . . as I am?



earth stood hard as i - ron, wa - ter like a stone;
heav'n and earth shall flee a - way when he comes to reign;
If I were a shep - herd I would bring a lamb;



snow had fall - en, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak mid - win - ter a sta - ble place suf - ficed
if I were a wise . . . man I would do my part;



in the bleak mid - win - ter, long a - go.
the Lord . . . God al - might - y, Je - sus Christ.
yet what I can I give him— give my heart.



in the bleak mid - win - ter, long a - go.
the Lord . . . God al - might - y, Je - sus Christ.
yet what I can I give him— give my heart.

THE NICENE CREED

- ☐ With the whole church, let us confess our faith.
- ☑ **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.**

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 Bruce Witls, brother-in-law of Lin Sheely

Illness: Richard Bock, Don Burton, Mike Cswerko, Carol Duncan, sister of Debbie Robinson, Mike Edris, Rodney Edwards, Samuel Garrett, Richard Holzer, father of James Holzer, Renee Johnson, daughter-in-law of Ken & Linda Johnson, Marcie Lafleur, Mary Olson, Gary Rodene, Al Schewe, Phoebe Stanga, niece of Karen & Shirley Bonneau, Sheri Tipton, Dorothy Vancaster, Charlie Wachholtz, Darlene White, Robert Whitehead, Kimberly Wilson, Joanne Worm, Marianne Zinnecker, mother of Don Zinnecker

Other Prayers: *Those serving in the military* – Amy Dyer, Brennan Hron, Wyatt Johnson, Josh Kropenske, 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; and Dan & Ginny Rath, international translators

Other Prayers: *Seminarians*—Adam Klinker, Katie Larson, Giselle Loucks, Justin Perkins

WE SHARE GOD’S PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.
C 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 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. If you are able, please mail in your offering or donate on-line. Thank you!

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

“Mary, Did You Know?”

arr. Bober
Jean Johnson, piano

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** Gracious God,
C you came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us at your banquet table, that with all who welcome your birth we will proclaim your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

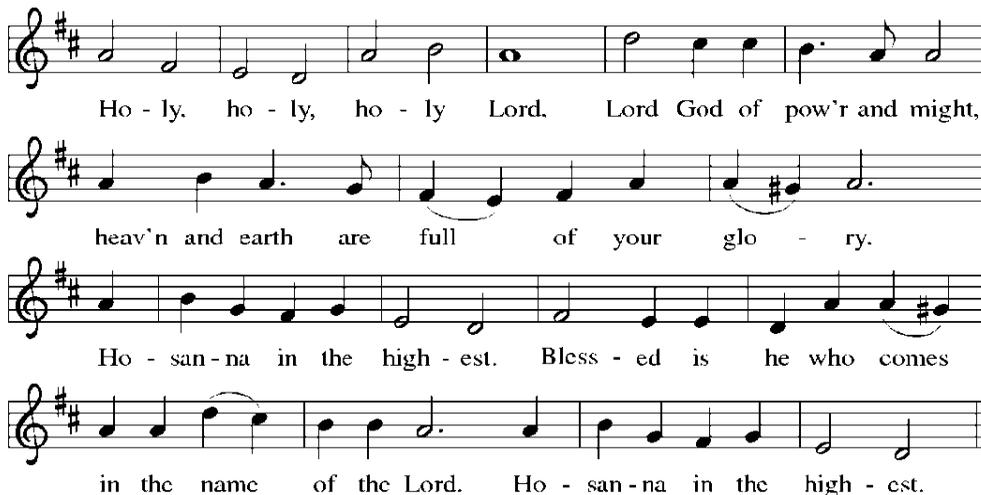
HOLY COMMUNION

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

PREFACE FOR CHRISTMAS

- P** 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. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see. 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 *(sung to the tune of 'Away in a Manger')*

**Our Father in heaven, all praise to Your Name!
Your kingdom among us, Your will done the same
By mortals and angels. Come, Lord, reign alone:
Oh, hear us and bless us from heaven's high throne.**

**The bread that we yearn for provide us each day;
As we forgive others, our sins take away;
In times of temptation, to lead us be near;
From evil deliver Your children most dear.**

**For Yours is the kingdom; o'er all things You reign.
And Yours is the power; all things You maintain.
To you be the glory, resounding again
From all of creation, forever! Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

- ☐ The Word is revealed in a manger, in simple bread and wine.
- ☑ **Come meet Christ in this meal.**

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 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.

(sit)

AGNUS DEI



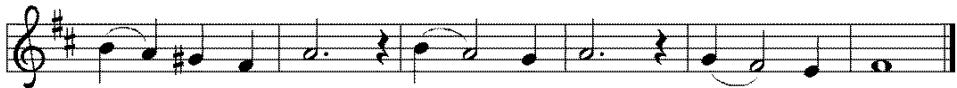
Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



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.

HYMNS DURING COMMUNION

"From Heaven Above"

ELW 268 vs. 1-6

1 "From heav'n above to earth I come
to bear good news to ev'ry home!
Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to all the world, and gladly sing:"

2 "To you this night is born a child
of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
this newborn child of lowly birth
shall be the joy of all the earth."

3 "This is the Christ, God's Son most high,
who hears your sad and bitter cry,
who will himself your Savior be
and from all sin will set you free."

4 "The blessing that the Father planned
the Son holds in his infant hand,
that in his kingdom, bright and fair,
you may with us his glory share."

5 "These are the signs that you will see
to let you know that it is he:
in manger-bed, in swaddling clothes
the child who all the earth upholds."

6 Now let us all with joyful cheer
go with the shepherds and draw near
to see this wondrous gift of God,
the blessed child to us bestowed.

Text: Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

1 The first Noel the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds
in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!
Born is the King of Israel.

2 They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.

Refrain

3 And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.

Refrain

4 This star drew near to the northwest,
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay
right over the place where Jesus lay. *Refrain*

5 Then entered in those wise men three,
full rev'rently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence
their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.

Refrain

Text: English traditional

(stand)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- P** We give you thanks, gracious God,
C that you have once again fed us from your very self with the body and blood of Christ.
Through this mystery, send us forth to proclaim your promise to a world in need, through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

- ☞ Almighty God, who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary, proclaimed joy through the angels, sent the shepherds with good news, and led the magi by a star, bless you this day, ✠ through the Word made flesh.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

HYMN

“Go Tell It on the Mountain”

ELW 290

Refrain

**Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born!**

- 1 While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. *Refrain***

**2 The shepherds feared and trembled
when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain***

- 3 Down in a lonely manger
the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain***

Text: African American spiritual, refrain;
John W. Work Jr., 1872-1925, stanzas, alt.

DISMISSAL

- ☞ Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.
☞ **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

Mark Jones, Organist

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Special Notice

If you plan to attend Worship in person, please call/e-mail the church office no later than noon on the Thursday before the Saturday or 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

January 2 & 3, 2021

Kountze Food Pantry Thank You & Volunteers Needed

Mondays, 7:30 - 9:00 AM;
9:00 - 11:00 AM;
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Fridays, 4:00 - 7:00 PM

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Christmas hygiene bags for Pantry guests! Between products collected and monetary contributions, we will be able to hand out 250 gift bags which include: shampoo/conditioner, soap, razor, shaving cream, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush, and floss. We will distribute the bags on December 21. On December 14, we distributed 250, 30 lbs. extra boxes, provided by the government and Food Bank, which contained canned goods and pantry items. It was a welcome surprise for our guests! More good news is Kountze received \$1,370.82 from Family Fare receipts! Please keep them coming! As winter approaches, the pantry will be in need of volunteers willing to take a turn facing the elements while helping guests to their cars. The more people we have, the shorter the shift. Right now, we have 2 or 3 people doing all the work for 4 hours. Please consider helping them out by volunteering at the link below:

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

Altar Flowers, Eternal Candle, Television Broadcast for 2021

You can help us beautify the altar at Kountze or sponsor a television broadcast if you wish. This is a simple and meaningful way to honor a loved one who has passed away, celebrate a special anniversary or milestone, or can be given in thanksgiving for friends or family. Their names will appear in the church bulletin on the weekend you select. You can sign up for a date to provide flowers, eternal candle, and/or television broadcast by calling the church office and/or mail your check to the church and note what it is for, and who it is in honor of, in memory, or thanksgiving of.

Today at Kountze

Welcome Pastor Shari Duminy!

We welcome our new Associate Pastor, Shari Duminy, and are excited and blessed to have her pastoral skills in our midst. For your directory, Pr. Shari's e-mail address is shari@kmlchurch.org

Television Broadcast is sponsored by Pr. Paul & Donna Moessner in celebration of their 45th wedding anniversary

Online Sunday School

Lessons are videotaped and posted on the KMLC Parents Facebook page as well as our Kountze Facebook Page.

Youth Forum

Sundays at 10:10 AM

IN-PERSON: The youth group will meet in-person on the 1st & 3rd Sundays of the month. The 1st Sunday of the month will be current event Sunday. Please bring an article or current event to share (must be non-COVID related).

ZOOM: The youth group will meet via Zoom on the 2nd & 4th Sundays of the month.

Attendance and Giving

Saturday Attendance: 16

Sunday Attendance: 9:00: 38

Total: 54

Online Attendance: 350

Pantry Guests Served: Closed

Medical Clinic Guests Served: Closed

Offering:

\$19,672.00 (Regular)

\$11,571.48 (Specials)

\$3,012.00 (Debt Reduction)

Jesus enters our world full of grace and truth.

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

Sunday	John 1:1-18	The Word became flesh
Monday	Jeremiah 31:7-14	Israel will return to its own land
Tuesday	Ephesians 1:3-14	Spiritual blessings in Christ
Wednesday	Matthew 2:1-12	The visit of the wise men
Thursday	Colossians 1:15-23	The person and work of Christ
Friday	Genesis 1:1-4	God creates light
Saturday	Psalms 147:12-20	Sing and praise the Lord
Sunday	Mark 1:4-11	The baptism of Jesus



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And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NRSV)

A Prayer for the Week:

Almighty and merciful God, we thank you for blessing us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. Amen. (Ephesians 1:3)

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, you who give us food to eat and Jesus to meet, thank you for your abundant love that comes to us from above. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God shine the light of Christ, full of grace and truth, on you now and always.

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

- What are some of your memories of the Christmas season this past year?
- In what ways can you focus on Jesus' birth during the 12 days of Christmas?
- Is it important to you that Jesus, God the Son, became human? Why or why not?

Read: John 1:1-18.

The Gospel of John does not have a birth story like Matthew or Luke. In a sense, this is John's birth story, but instead of talking about Mary, Joseph, and Bethlehem, John speaks about what Jesus' birth means for us: light for the world; the Word of God becomes human in Jesus Christ; through the Word that is Jesus, we are given grace and truth; we are given grace upon grace; all that God intends for us is shown to us through God's only Son, Jesus. John places all of this in the context of the creation story. In the Genesis creation story, God speaks and light, sky, dry land, and all of creation happens. In John 1 this speaking God is portrayed as the Word that has now taken on human form in Jesus. Through Jesus the Word now reveals something, God's grace and truth intended for all that God has made. It is a promise of abundance that lavishes God's goodness on earth through Jesus. This Jesus, the Word become flesh, will turn water into wine (John 2:1-11) and later in his ministry state that he brings the abundant life (John 10:10), all of which flows out of John's opening statement about the Word that becomes flesh and is full of grace and truth. How do you experience God's grace and truth in daily life?

Pray: **God of grace and truth, we thank you for giving us your Son, Jesus Christ, the Word that became human and speaks to us and gives us your abundant love and mercy. Amen.**

All the Scripture readings this week speak of God's abundant love showered on God's people. We live in a world where not all people have enough to eat or have adequate shelter. How can you take action steps to be the hands, feet, and voice of God's love to others this week?

During Advent and the Christmas season, we light candles to symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of Jesus. Place a candle as a centerpiece on your dinner table this week. Before each meal, as you light the candle:

Say: **Jesus Christ is the light of the world. The light no darkness can overcome.**

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11