

KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A CITY-WIDE CHURCH WITH A WORLD-WIDE MINISTRY

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

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

February 21, 2021

9:00 AM

FIRST SUNDAY of LENT



On Ash Wednesday the church began its journey toward baptismal immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. First Peter connects the way God saved Noah's family in the flood with the way God saves us through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

*“I’ve Been in the Storm So Long”
“There Is a Balm in Gilead”*

African-American Spirituals
arr. David Kidwell
Mark Jones, *organ*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(stand)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer.

C Amen.

P God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P Fountain of living water,

C **pour out your mercy over us.**

Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free.

Rebuild what we have ruined

and mend what we have torn.

Wash us in your cleansing flood.

Make us alive in the Spirit

to follow in the way of Jesus,

as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.

P Beloved, God’s word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are † forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus.

C Amen.

- 1** A mighty fortress is our God,
a sword and shield victorious;
he breaks the cruel oppressor's rod
and wins salvation glorious.
The old satanic foe
has sworn to work us woe!
With craft and dreadful might
he arms himself to fight.
On earth he has no equal.
- 2** No strength of ours can match his might!
We would be lost, rejected.
But now a champion comes to fight,
whom God himself elected.
You ask who this may be?
The Lord of hosts is he!
Christ Jesus, mighty Lord,
God's only Son, adored.
He holds the field victorious.
- 3** Though hordes of devils fill the land
all threat'ning to devour us,
we tremble not, unmoved we stand;
they cannot overpower us.
Let this world's tyrant rage;
in battle we'll engage!
His might is doomed to fail;
God's judgment must prevail!
One little word subdues him.
- 4** God's Word forever shall abide,
no thanks to foes, who fear it;
for God himself fights by our side
with weapons of the Spirit.
Were they to take our house,
goods, honor, child, or spouse,
though life be wrenched away,
they cannot win the day.
The kingdom's ours forever!

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

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.

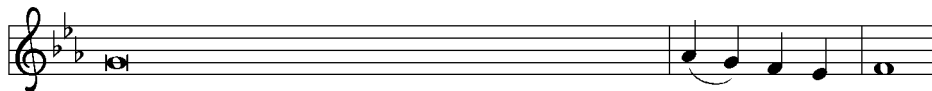
KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mercy.



For the peace from above, and for our salvation, 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 holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord.

A - men, a - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- ☞ Holy God, heavenly Father,
- ☞ **in the waters of the flood, you saved the chosen, and in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism. May your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no power over us, 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

Genesis 9:8-17

Today's reading is the conclusion to the flood story. Because of human sin, God destroys the earth by flood, saving only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Yet divine destruction gives way to divine commitment. As in the first creation, God blesses humanity and establishes a covenant with all creatures.

God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹*“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”* ¹²God said, *“This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”* ¹⁷God said to Noah, *“This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”*

☞ The word of the Lord.

☞ **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 25:1-10 (read responsively)

¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

²**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

³Let none who look to you be put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

⁴**Show me your ways, O LORD,
and teach me your paths.**

⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

⁶**Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love,
for they are from everlasting.**

⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.

⁸**You are gracious and upright, O LORD;
therefore you teach sinners in your way.**

⁹You lead the lowly in justice
and teach the lowly your way.

¹⁰**All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast love and faithfulness
to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.**

THE SECOND READING

1 Peter 3:18-22

As God acted through Christ's suffering and death to bring us to God, so God acts through baptism to save us from a sinful existence. This spiritual cleansing marks our new life in Christ.

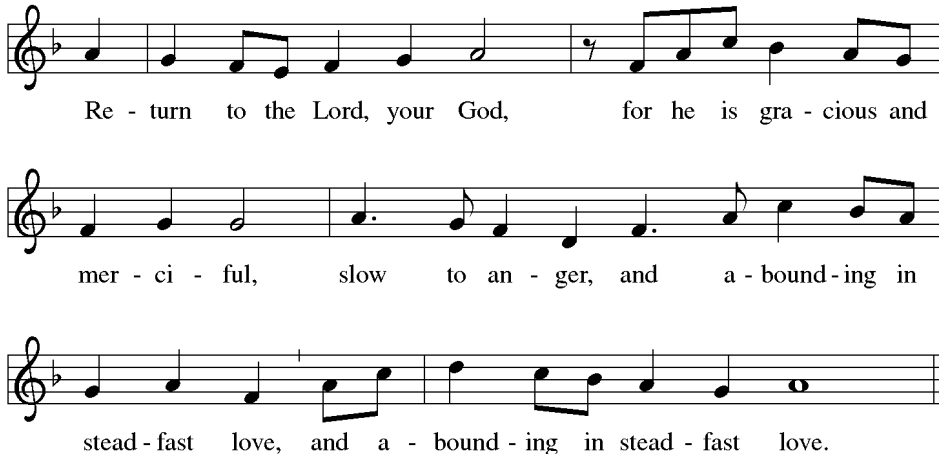
Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him .

L The word of the Lord.

G Thanks be to God.

(stand)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and
mer - ci - ful, slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in
stead - fast love, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark.

G Glory to you, O Lord!

HOLY GOSPEL

Mark 1:9-15

The Spirit that comes upon Jesus at his baptism sustains him when he is tested by Satan so that he might proclaim the good news of God's reign.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “*You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.*”

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.*”

☞ The Gospel of the Lord.

☞ Praise to you, O Christ.

(sit)

CHILDREN’S BLESSING

SERMON

Pastor Juliet Focken

(stand)

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word”

ELW 517

**1 Lord, keep us steadfast in your word;
curb those who by deceit or sword
would wrest the kingdom from your Son
and bring to naught all he has done.**

**2 Lord Jesus Christ, your pow'r make known,
for you are Lord of lords alone;
defend your holy church, that we
may sing your praise eternally.**

**3 O Comforter of priceless worth,
send peace and unity on earth;
support us in our final strife
and lead us out of death to life.**

Text: Martin Luther, 1483-1546;
tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.

INSTALLATION OF PASTOR DUMINY PRESENTATION

☞ Having been authorized by the church to install Shari Duminy, our co-worker in the gospel, as Associate Pastor, I now ask for certification of this call.

A representative of the calling body addresses the presiding minister.

After prayerful deliberation, we, of Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church have called Shari Duminy as Associate Pastor. I present her and this letter certifying the call.

The representative gives the presiding minister the letter certifying that the call has been received and accepted.

(sit)

ADDRESS AND QUESTIONS

- ☐ A reading from John: Jesus said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:21-23)
- ☐ A reading from Matthew: Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)
- ☐ A reading from First Timothy: Set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Attend to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Timothy 4:12-16)
- ☐ Shari Duminy, in the presence of this assembly will you commit yourself to this new trust and responsibility, in the confidence that it comes from God through the call of the church?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

- ☐ Will you preach and teach in accordance with the holy scriptures and with the confessions of the Lutheran church? Will you carry out this ministry in harmony with the constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

- ☐ Will you be diligent in your study of the holy scriptures and in your use of the means of grace? Will you love, serve, and pray for God's people, nourish them with the word and sacraments, and lead them by your own example in faithful service and holy living?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

- ☐ Will you give faithful witness in the world, that God's love may be known in all that you do?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

- ☐ Almighty God, who has given you the will to do these things, graciously give you the strength and compassion to perform them.

☑ **Amen.**

(stand)

- ☐ People of God, will you receive Shari Duminy as a messenger of Jesus Christ sent to serve all people with the gospel of hope and salvation? Will you regard her as a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God?

☑ **We will, and we ask God to help us.**

Ⓟ Will you pray for her, help and honor her for her work's sake, and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?

☞ **We will, and we ask God to help us.**

Ⓟ Shari Duminy, the office of Associate Pastor is now committed to you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

☞ **Amen.**

BLESSING

Ⓟ The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do God's will, working in you that which is pleasing in God's sight; through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

☞ **Amen.**

THE APOSTLES' CREED

Ⓟ With the whole church, let us 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.**

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 Angi Streed, pantry volunteer & family of Curt Johnson

Illness: Lois Andresen, Richard Bock, Kristin Boe, Don Burton, Carol Duncan, Mike Edris, Rodney Edwards, Richard Holzer, Renee Johnson, Gerald Klonglan, father of Jason Klonglan, Jason Klonglan, Marcie Lafleur, Ron Muchmore, Mary Olson, David Penning, Toby Rees, Gary Rodene, Judy Ryan, Al Schewe, Helen Taylor, Sheri Tipton, Dorothy Vancaster, John Waterman, Darlene White, Robert Whitehead

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 MUSIC

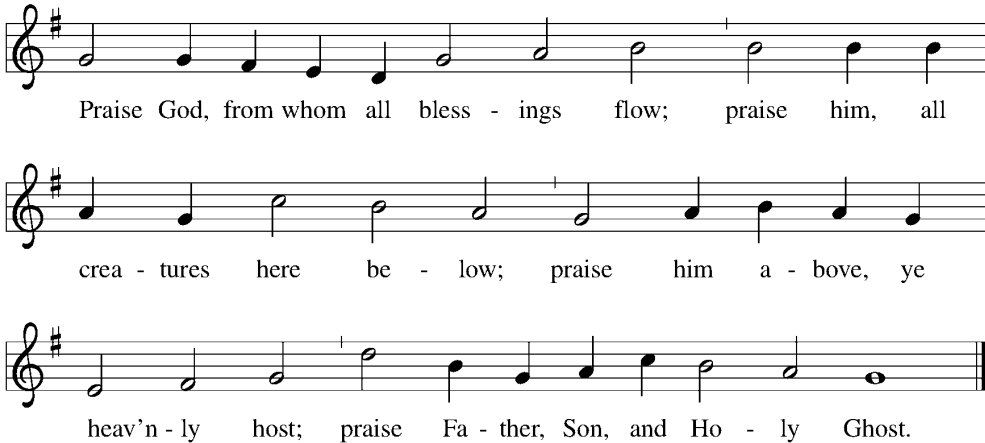
*“God of Mercy and Compassion”
traditional French melody*

Adapted from G.B. Pergolosi
Kevin Larkowski, *soloist*

THE TABLE IS PREPARED

(stand)

OFFERTORY HYMN

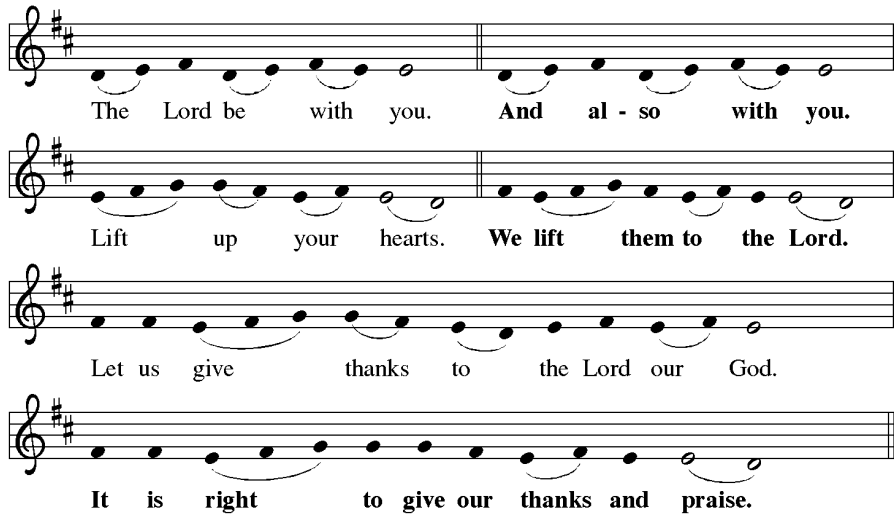


Praise God, from whom all bless - ings flow; praise him, all
crea - tures here be - low; praise him a - bove, ye
heav'n - ly host; praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

OFFERING PRAYER

- ☐ Faithful God,
- ☑ you walk beside us in desert places, and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven. Accompany us in this meal, that we will pass over from death to life with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

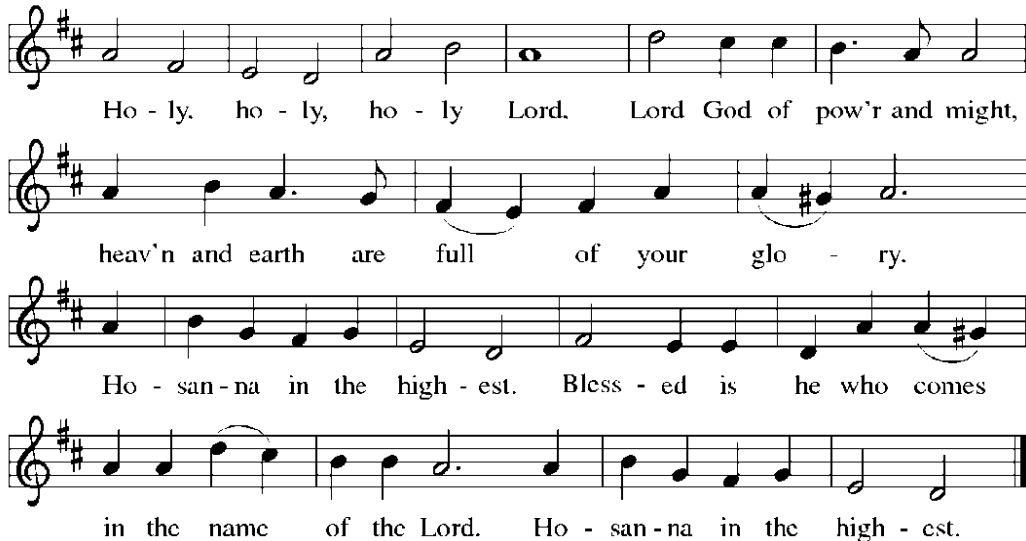


The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE FOR LENT

- ☐ 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. You call us, your people, to cleanse our hearts and prepare with joy for the Easter celebration, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we will come to the fullness of your grace. 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

- ☐ Jesus draws the whole world to himself.
- ☑ **Come to this meal and be fed.**

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.

**1 Let us break bread together on our knees;
let us break bread together on our knees.**

Refrain

**When I fall on my knees,
with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.**

**2 Let us drink wine together on our knees;
let us drink wine together on our knees.**

Refrain

**3 Let us praise God together on our knees;
let us praise God together on our knees.**

Refrain

Text: African American spiritual

“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”

ELW 338

**1 Beneath the cross of Jesus
I long to take my stand;
the shadow of a mighty rock
within a weary land,
a home within a wilderness,
a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat
and burdens of the day.**

**2 Upon the cross of Jesus,
my eye at times can see
the very dying form of one
who suffered there for me.
And from my contrite heart, with tears,
two wonders I confess:
the wonder of his glorious love
and my unworthiness.**

**3 I take, O cross, your shadow
for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than
the sunshine of his face;
content to let the world go by,
to know no gain nor loss,
my sinful self my only shame,
my glory all, the cross.**

Text: Elizabeth C. Clephane, 1830-1869

*(stand)***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

☞ God of steadfast love,

☞ at this table you gather your people into one body for the sake of the world. Send us in the power of your Spirit, that our lives will bear witness to the love that has made us new in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

- ☞ You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God the Father, ✠ Son and Holy Spirit bless you that you may be a blessing.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

HYMN

“My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less”

ELW 597

**1 My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
no merit of my own I claim,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.**

Refrain

**On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
all other ground is sinking sand.**

**2 When darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on his unchanging grace;
in ev'ry high and stormy gale
my anchor holds within the veil.**

Refrain

**3 His oath, his covenant, his blood
sustain me in the raging flood;
when all supports are washed away,
he then is all my hope and stay.**

Refrain

**4 When he shall come with trumpet
sound,
oh, may I then in him be found,
clothed in his righteousness alone,
redeemed to stand before the throne!**

Refrain

Text: Edward Mote, 1797-1874, alt.

DISMISSAL

- ☞ Go in peace. Share the good news.
☞ **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

“Every Time I Hear the Spirit”

African-American Spiritual
arr. David Kidwell
Mark Jones, *organ*

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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
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Omaha, NE 68131
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February 20 & 21, 2021

Kountze Food Pantry Good News! and 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**

We received good news! The state has re-funded the Farmers to Families program until June. This program provides a 28 lb. box of vegetables and fruit. They also provide 1 gallon of milk. This program is free for us. The only bad news is we rarely have enough volunteers to unload and prepare the boxes. We still need volunteers to carry out food to the cars of our guests. We have shopping carts to assist the volunteers, so you only have to lift into and out of the cart. You will be paid handsomely with coffee and Barb's cookies! Please consider helping them out by volunteering at the link below:

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

Youth Summer Trip

Summer Trip Planning is continuing to take place. Let us know of your interest so you can be informed about our plans. An email to Pastor Shari (shari@kmlchurch.org) will greatly help in the planning.

Register for Summer Camp!

Go to <https://www.caroljoyholling.org/schedule>

Attendance and Giving

Saturday Attendance: 11
Sunday Attendance: 9:00: 54
Wednesday Attendance: 55
Total: 120
Online Attendance: 261
Pantry Guests Served: 0
Medical Clinic Guests Served: 34
Offering:
\$13,674.00 (Regular) \$3750.24 (Specials)
\$1,582.00 (Debt Reduction)

to register. Note: all deposits are fully refundable for the 2021 summer camp season. All summer camp registrations are done on a secure online registration site called UltraCamp. Directions for registration will be on the camp website.

PLEASE NOTE: The "printer demons" were at work in the hard copy of the Annual Report you may have received. The expense portion of the Treasurer's report has some items listed twice and others that were omitted. The Annual Report posted on our website has the correct information ([/www.kmlchurch.org/annual-reports/](http://www.kmlchurch.org/annual-reports/))

Today at Kountze

Eternal Candle is given to the glory of God by Myrtle Weible in thanksgiving of Judy Ryan for her kindness, cards, and phone calls

Online Sunday School

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

Youth Forum

In-Person & Zoom on Sundays, 10:15 - 11:00 AM

All 9th - 12th Graders are invited to join us!

We will meet in person in the Fellowship Lounge and on Zoom each week

- 1st Sunday: Current Events (non-COVID related)
- 2nd Sunday: Bible Ponderings
- 3rd Sunday: Serving in the World and Games
- 4th Sunday: Checking In and Sharing Hopes
- 5th Sunday: Adventures (if on Zoom, we will carry you along with us.)

Contact Pastor Shari (402-341-7761 or shari@kmlchurch.org) if you need the Zoom Link info. We will continue to be masked and physically distanced for all meetings in person at the church.

God's mercy conquers evil.

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

Sunday	Mark 1:9-15	Temptation of Jesus
Monday	Genesis 9:8-17	God's promise to Noah
Tuesday	1 Peter 3:18-22	Suffering for doing right
Wednesday	2 Samuel 24:10-17	Judgment on David's sin
Thursday	Titus 3:1-11	Maintain good deeds
Friday	Hebrews 4:14-16	Jesus is the great high priest
Saturday	Psalms 25:1-10	Prayer for guidance
Sunday	Mark 8:31-38	Jesus predicts his death



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Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Psalm 25:6 (NRSV)

A Prayer for the Week:

Gracious God, thank you for entering our lives and our world to confront all that is opposed to your reign of mercy through Christ, your Beloved Son. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, with this gift of food, let us remember your steadfast love and mercy that gives us life that we may live with hope. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May God lead you in truth and teach you the way of Christ our Lord. (Psalm 25:5)

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

- How would you describe evil?
- Tell or think about a time you felt tested or tempted to do something wrong.
- Jesus was tested by Satan. How is Jesus' confronting Satan in the wilderness a story of hope?

Read: Mark 1:9-15.

This text is a fitting beginning for the season of Lent. At Jesus' baptism God intervenes by opening up the heavens and speaking of Jesus as God's Beloved Son. Jesus is thrown into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to confront Satan, the personification of all that opposes God's reign. Jesus endures, and he is cared for by the angels of God. Jesus then begins his own public ministry following the arrest of John the Baptist. John's experience is a precursor to Jesus' own betrayal and arrest to fulfill all that God intends to do through the Beloved Son. And, then, Jesus goes out to do the work of the kingdom, the reign of God that has not been stopped by Satan and will not be stopped, ever. The preaching is simple: repent and believe in the good news of God's reign. Repentance is not about remorse but about turning around and going in another direction, toward God and what God can and will do. This Lent, we are reminded to trust the work of God that will defeat everything opposed to God's rule of steadfast love and mercy. How will you repent and focus on the reign of God in your life and in the world?

Pray: **Almighty and merciful God, help us to trust your reign present now and forevermore through Jesus, your Beloved Son and our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

The story of Noah and the flood is a difficult story to grasp. The point of the story is that God's demand for justice (the flood) is finally outdone by God's mercy (a new beginning for creation for those on the ark). Justice does not stand alone. It needs mercy, especially in our world where no human has the wisdom of God to judge. Do you know someone who needs a word of mercy? Write a note to that person and pray for them this week.

Lent is a season filled with traditions that focus on discipline and discipleship. Choose a devotional space in your home. Consider laying out a purple cloth (the color for repentance and Lent) and place a candle and Bible on it. Read the *Daily Bible Readings*. Use the *Prayer for the Week* and add your own prayers. End the time by saying:

Remember that you are God's, and to God you shall return.

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31
Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38