

KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

A CITY-WIDE CHURCH WITH A WORLD-WIDE MINISTRY

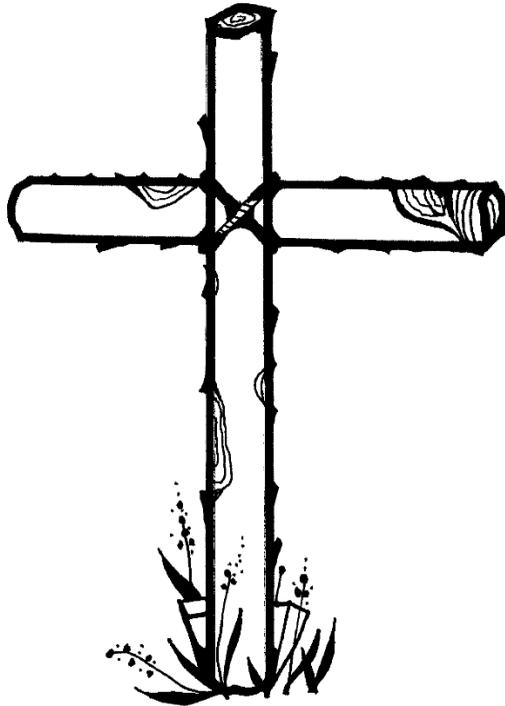
Olaf Roynesdal, Senior Pastor
Shari Duminy, Associate Pastor
H. Ashley Hall, Associate Pastor
Inba Inbarasu, Visitation Pastor

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

February 28, 2021

9:00 AM

SECOND SUNDAY in LENT



The second covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God's promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ.

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, 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 Our Father, we have wandered
and hidden from your face;
in foolishness have squandered
your legacy of grace.
But now, in exile dwelling,
we rise with fear and shame,
as, distant but compelling,
we hear you call our name.

2 And now at length discerning
the evil that we do,
behold us, Lord, returning
with hope and trust to you.
In haste you come to meet us
and home rejoicing bring,
in gladness there to greet us
with calf and robe and ring.

3 O Lord of all the living,
both banished and restored,
compassionate, forgiving,
and ever-caring Lord,
grant now that our transgressing,
our faithlessness may cease.
Stretch out your hand in blessing,
in pardon, and in peace.

Text: Kevin Nichols, 1929-2006

Text from *Resource Collection of Hymns and Service Music for the Liturgy* © 1981

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.

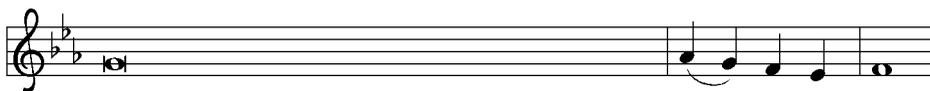
KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



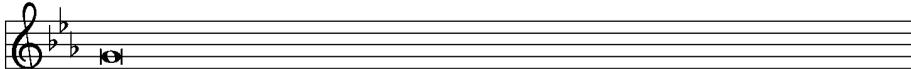
Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



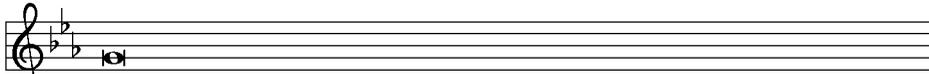
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



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 de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men, a - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P O God,

C by the passion of your blessed Son you made and instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son, 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 17:1-7, 15-16

As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah's womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God's promise.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “*I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.*”² *And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.*”³ Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, “*As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations.*”⁵ *No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations.*”⁶ *I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.*”⁷ *I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*”

¹⁵God said to Abraham, “*As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.*”¹⁶ *I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.*”

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM 22:23-31 (read responsively)

²³You who fear the LORD, give praise! All you of Jacob's line, give glory.
Stand in awe of the LORD, all you off-spring of Israel.

²⁴**For the LORD does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty;
neither is the LORD's face hidden from them;
but when they cry out, the LORD hears them.**

²⁵From you comes my praise in the great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the LORD.

²⁶**The poor shall eat and be satisfied,**

Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow before God.

²⁸**For dominion belongs to the LORD,
who rules over the nations.**

²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.

³⁰**Their descendants shall serve the LORD,
whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.**

³¹They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying to them, "The LORD has acted!"

THE SECOND READING

Romans 4:13-25

Paul presents Abraham as the example for how a person comes into a right relationship with God not through works of the law but through faith. Though Abraham and Sarah were far too old for bearing children, Abraham trusted that God would accomplish what God had promised to accomplish.

The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, "*I have made you the father of many nations*")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "*the father of many nations*," according to what was said, "*So numerous shall your descendants be.*" ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore his faith "*was reckoned to him as righteousness.*" ²³Now the words, "*it was reckoned to him,*" were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

📖 The word of the Lord.

🙏 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.

☐ The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark.

☑ **Glory to you, O Lord!**

HOLY GOSPEL

Mark 8:31-38

After Peter confesses his belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells his disciples for the first time what is to come. Peter's response indicates that he does not yet understand the way of the cross that Jesus will travel.

Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the Elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “*Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.*”

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “*If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*”

☐ The Gospel of the Lord.

☑ **Praise to you, O Christ.**

(sit)

CHILDREN'S BLESSING

SERMON

Pastor Duminy

(stand)

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Lord, Speak to Us, That We May Speak”

ELW 676

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Lord, speak to us, that we may speak
in living echoes of your tone;
as you have sought, so let us seek
your straying children, lost and lone.</p> <p>2 Oh, lead us, Lord, that we may lead
the wand'ring and the wav'ring feet;
oh, feed us, Lord, that we may feed
your hung'ring ones with manna sweet.</p> | <p>3 Oh, teach us, Lord, that we may teach
the precious truths which you impart;
and wing our words, that they may reach
the hidden depths of many a heart.</p> <p>4 Oh, fill us with your fullness, Lord,
until our very hearts o'erflow
in kindling thought and glowing word,
your love to tell, your praise to show.</p> |
|--|---|

Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1836-1879, alt.

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,
 G 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 Kathryn Elsasser

Thanksgiving: for the birth of Hazel Micek, daughter of Nate & Genevieve Micek; for the baptism of Mila Lindgren, daughter of John & Amy Lindgren

Illness: Lois Andresen, Richard Bock, Kristin Boe, Don Burton, Ron Brown, 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. **G** 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

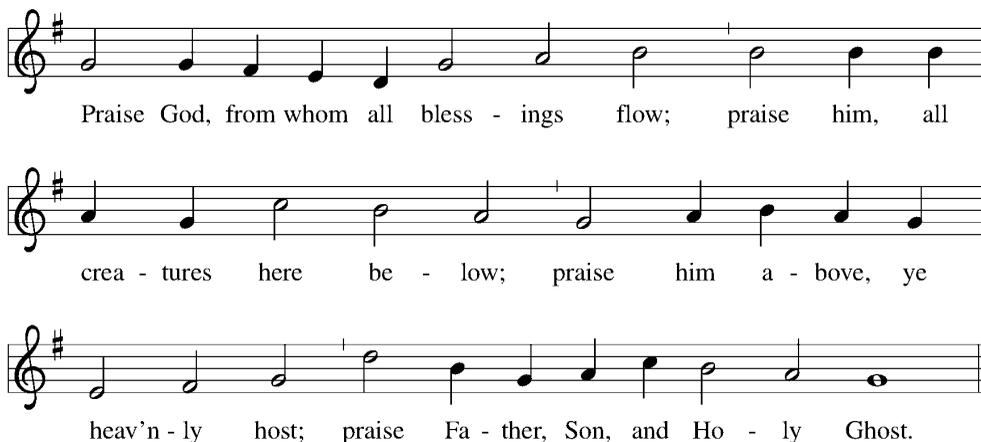
“Nearer, My God to Thee”

Tom Trenney
Nick Pignatore, *soloist*

THE TABLE IS PREPARED

(stand)

OFFERTORY HYMN

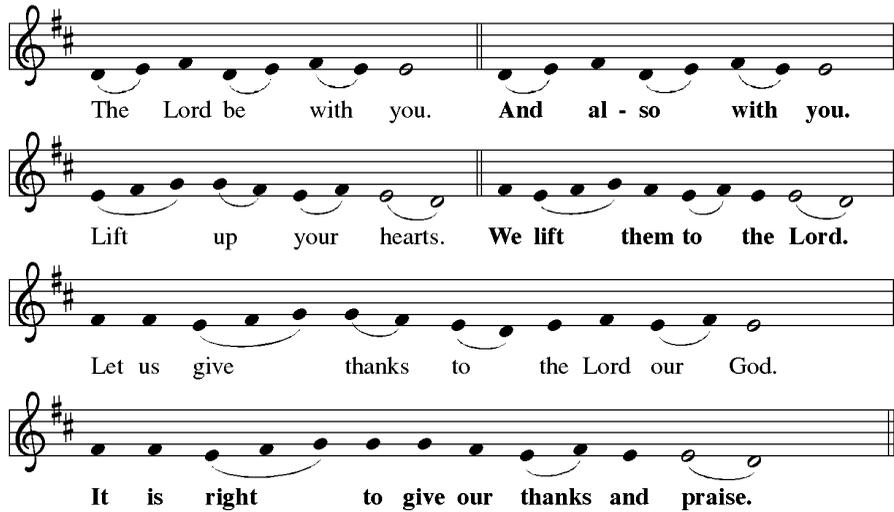


Praise God, from whom all bless - ings flow; praise him, all
crea - tures here be - low; praise him a - bove, ye
heav'n - ly host; praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

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

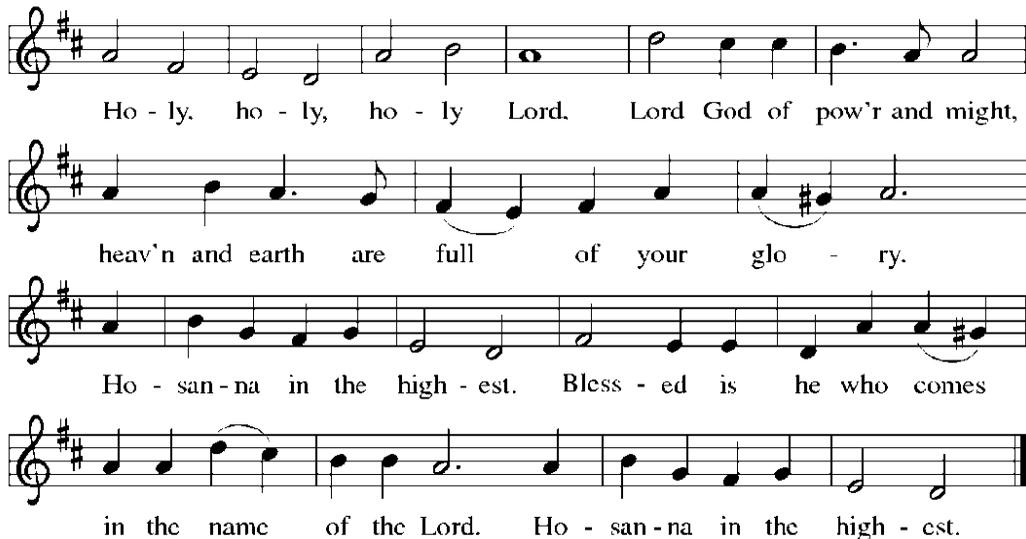


The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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

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 Jesus draws the whole world to himself.

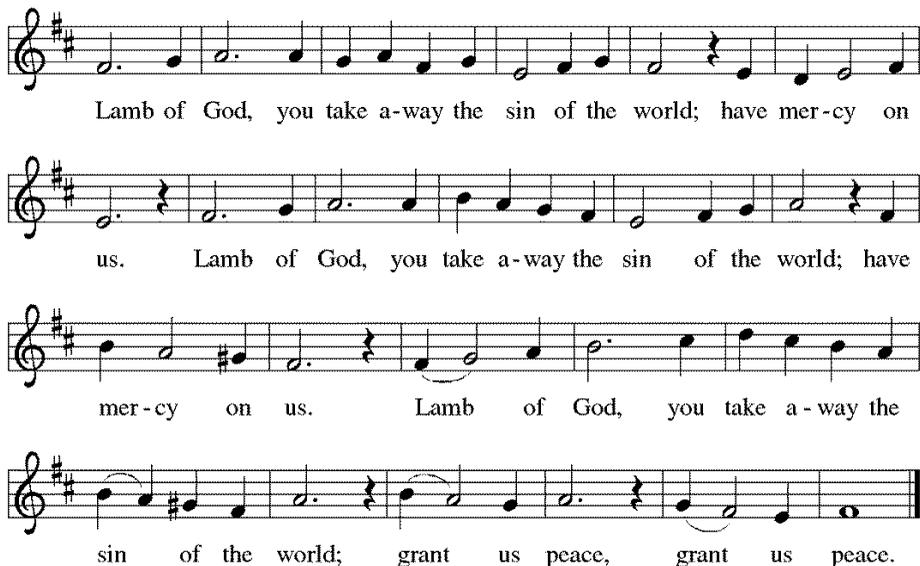
C **Come to this meal and be fed.**

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.

HYMNS DURING COMMUNION

“The Glory of these Forty Days”

ELW 320

- 1 The glory of these forty days
we celebrate with songs of praise;
for Christ, through whom all things were
made,
himself has fasted and has prayed.
- 2 Alone and fasting Moses saw
the loving God who gave the law;
and to Elijah, fasting, came
the steeds and chariots of flame.
- 3 So Daniel trained his mystic sight,
delivered from the lions' might;
and John, the Bridegroom's friend,
became
the herald of Messiah's name.
- 4 Then grant, O God, that we may, too,
return in fast and prayer to you.
Our spirits strengthen with your grace,
and give us joy to see your face.

Text: Latin hymn, 11th cent.; tr. Maurice F. Bell, 1862-1947, alt.

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

- P** God of steadfast love,
C 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

“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”

ELW 325

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 I want Jesus to walk with me;
I want Jesus to walk with me;
all along my pilgrim journey,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me. | 2 In my trials, Lord, walk with me;
in my trials, Lord, walk with me;
when my heart is almost breaking,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me. |
| 3 When I'm in trouble, Lord, walk with me;
when I'm in trouble, Lord, walk with me;
when my head is bowed in sorrow,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me. | |

Text: African American spiritual

DISMISSAL

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

POSTLUDE

Mark Jones, *organ*

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Spending Time (again!) with an Old Friend
Wednesdays, 7:00 PM
In-Person (please register by noon on Tuesday)
Live-Stream



Last year our midweek Lenten Worship was to give us an opportunity to visit an old friend: The Lord's Prayer. That was cut short by the pandemic. So again each week we will reflect on various petitions(s) of this great prayer gaining insights from Martin Luther's Small Catechism. The Pastors are looking forward to this special time and encourage you to come (or live-stream) and hopefully gain a new perspective and a new appreciation for the prayer we say most often.

Our Schedule will be as follows:

Wednesday, March 3

The Fourth Petition

"Give us this day our daily bread."

Wednesday, March 10

The Fifth Petition

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Wednesday, March 17

The Sixth Petition

"And lead us not into temptation."

Wednesday, March 24

The Seventh Petition and the Conclusion

"But deliver us from evil. Amen."

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
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February 27 & 28, 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: 29

Sunday Attendance: 9:00: 52

Wednesday Attendance: 27

Total: 108

Streaming Attendance: 189

Pantry Guests Served: 964

Medical Clinic Guests Served: 23

Offering:

\$12,194.00 (Regular) \$907.69 (Specials)

\$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.

Women's Quilt Group

We are in need of cotton fabric remnants and old sheets to use in quilts. If you have any sitting in your closets that you're not going to use, please let us take them off your hands! They will be put to good use in a quilt and is a tangible way to express love to our neighbors in need. Please bring any fabric donations to the church office. Thank you!

Today at Kountze

Eternal Candle is given to the glory of God by Pam & Bob Johnson to welcome Pr. Shari Duminy to Kountze Memorial.

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.

The difficulty and joy of discipleship.

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

Sunday	Mark 8:31-38	Jesus predicts his death
Monday	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16	Sign of the covenant
Tuesday	Romans 4:13-25	God's promise
Wednesday	2 Timothy 2:1-13	A good soldier of Christ
Thursday	2 Timothy 2:14-26	A worker approved by God
Friday	Proverbs 8:32-36	Listen to what you are taught
Saturday	Psalms 22:23-31	Suffering and praise
Sunday	John 2:13-22	Jesus cleanses the temple



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“For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” Mark 8:35 (NRSV)

A Prayer for the Week:

Almighty God, help us to remember that it is in giving that we receive and in caring for others that we experience the joy of following Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, as you satisfy us with this food and for all that blesses us this day, we give you thanks. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the God who gives life to the dead and who calls into existence things that do not exist bless you with faith. (Romans 4:17b)

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

- What is something you didn't want to do because it was too difficult?
- Do you think it is difficult to follow Jesus? Why or why not?
- How would you describe a life of faith that lives for others?

Read: Mark 8:31-38.

These are some of the most difficult words to hear as followers of Jesus. To truly live as people of God, we are to live for the needs of others, just as Jesus did. It is hard for Peter—and us—to hear that Christ must suffer and die a criminal's death before rising to glory. It is hard for us to imagine picking up the cross, the tool of torture and death, and courageously walk with it daily for the sake of the good news of Christ and the needs of others. The Gospel of Mark is not a happy text for disciples. The Gospel ends with Jesus' followers running away and Peter denying his Lord in the courtyard of the high priest. Our challenge is not to run away and deny the needs of others. According to Mark, we don't do this well. The good news is that Jesus never gives up on us. To the disciples who ran away from him and denied him, he says in essence, “meet me in Galilee, where your ministry and life will truly begin” (Mark 16:7). By the end of Mark, there are no great stories of bravery and success of the disciples. What exists is a promise that Jesus will go before them and be with them into the future. The disciples will continue to hear Jesus' words, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (v. 34). What have you found to be difficult to do as a follower of Jesus? What have you found to be a joy as a follower?

Pray: Dear God, thank you for never giving up on us as we seek to lovingly give of ourselves for the needs of others and the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Making pretzels is a Lenten tradition. Pretzels are shaped like arms folded in prayer and can remind us to pray to God for our needs and the needs of others. Choose some people beyond your household to pray for by name this week. Make or buy pretzels to give to them as a sign that you are praying for them.

Jesus tells us that following him means taking up our cross, that is, saying no to ourselves and sometimes suffering for him. This week make a cross from wood, card stock, or other materials. Hold the cross during your devotional time this week while reading the Daily Bible Readings. Say 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: Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22