

# KOUNTZE MEMORIAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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

2650 Farnam Street  
Omaha, NE 68131-3616  
402-341-7761  
[www.kmlchurch.org](http://www.kmlchurch.org)

May 9, 2021

9:00 AM

SIXTH SUNDAY of EASTER



*This Sunday's image of the life the risen Christ shares with us is the image of friendship. We are called to serve others as Jesus came to serve; but for John's gospel, the image of servanthood is too hierarchical, too distant, to capture the essence of life with Christ. Friendship captures the love, the joy, the deep mutuality of the relationship into which Christ invites us. The Greeks believed that true friends are willing to die for each other. This is the mutual love of Christian community commanded by Christ and enabled by the Spirit.*



# GATHERING

## PRELUDE

*Mark Jones, organ*

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*(stand)*

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

**P** Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, Father, † Son, Holy Spirit, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

**C** Amen.

**P** God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we will confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C** Amen.

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

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

**P** Gracious God,

**C** have mercy on us.

**We confess that we have turned from you  
and given ourselves into the power of sin.**

**We are truly sorry and humbly repent.**

**In your compassion forgive us our sins,  
known and unknown,  
things we have done  
and things we have failed to do.**

**Turn us again to you,  
and uphold us by your Spirit,  
so that we may live and serve you in newness of life  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

**P** In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

- 1** Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter ev'ry trembling heart.
- 2** Breathe, oh, breathe thy loving Spirit  
into ev'ry troubled breast;  
let us all in thee inherit;  
let us find thy promised rest.  
Take away the love of sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
end of faith, as its beginning,  
set our hearts at liberty.
- 3** Come, Almighty, to deliver;  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.
- 4** Finish then thy new creation,  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee!  
Changed from glory into glory,  
till in heav'n we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

## EASTER GREETING

- P** Alleluia! Christ is risen.
- C** Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!
- 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.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

- P** O God,
- C** you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

# WORD

(sit)

## FIRST READING

Acts 10:44-84

*While Peter shares the good news of Jesus with a Gentile soldier and his family, the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Recognizing that the Spirit works inclusively in the lives of both Jews and Gentiles, Peter commands that these Gentiles also be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*

**W**hile Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, <sup>46</sup>for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup>“*Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?*” <sup>48</sup>So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

📖 The word of the Lord.

🙏 Thanks be to God.

## PSALM 98 *(read responsively)*

<sup>1</sup>Sing a new song to the LORD, who has done marvelous things,  
whose right hand and holy arm have won the victory.

**<sup>2</sup>O LORD, you have made known your victory,  
you have revealed your righteousness in the sight of the nations.**

<sup>3</sup>You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

**<sup>4</sup>Shout with joy to the LORD, all you lands;  
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.**

<sup>5</sup>Sing to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and the voice of song.

**<sup>6</sup>With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
shout with joy before the king, the LORD.**

<sup>7</sup>Let the sea roar, and all that fills it,  
the world and those who dwell therein.

**<sup>8</sup>Let the rivers clap their hands,  
and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD, who comes to judge the earth.**

<sup>9</sup>The LORD will judge the world with righteousness  
**and the peoples with equity.**

## SECOND READING

1 John 5:1-6

*God's children believe that Jesus is the Messiah and love God by keeping God's commandments. Thus the world is conquered not through military might but through love and faith.*

**E**veryone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. <sup>2</sup>By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. <sup>3</sup>For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, <sup>4</sup>for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

<sup>6</sup>This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

☒ The word of the Lord.

☑ Thanks be to God.

(stand)

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?



You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

☒ The Holy Gospel according to St. John.

☑ Glory to you, O Lord!

## HOLY GOSPEL

**John 15:9-17**

*On the night of his arrest, Jesus delivers a final testimony to his disciples to help them in the days ahead. Here, he repeats the most important of all his commands, that they love one another.*

**J**esus said <sup>9</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

☒ The Gospel of the Lord.

☑ Praise to you, O Christ.

*(sit)*

## CHILDREN'S BLESSING

### SERMON

*Pastor Duminy*

*(stand)*

### HYMN OF THE DAY

*"What Wondrous Love Is This"*

**ELW 666**

- 1 What wondrous love is this,  
O my soul, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this  
that caused the Lord of bliss  
to bear the dreadful curse  
for my soul, for my soul,  
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul?
- 2 When I was sinking down,  
sinking down, sinking down,  
when I was sinking down, sinking down,  
when I was sinking down  
beneath God's righteous frown,  
Christ laid aside his crown  
for my soul, for my soul,  
Christ laid aside his crown for my soul.
- 3 To God and to the Lamb  
I will sing, I will sing;  
to God and to the Lamb I will sing;  
to God and to the Lamb,  
who is the great I AM,  
while millions join the theme,  
I will sing, I will sing,  
while millions join the theme, I will sing.
- 4 And when from death I'm free,  
I'll sing on, I'll sing on;  
and when from death I'm free, I'll sing on;  
and when from death I'm free,  
I'll sing God's love for me,  
and through eternity  
I'll sing on, I'll sing on;  
and through eternity I'll sing on.

Text: North American folk hymn, 19th cent., alt.

## NICENE CREED

**☒ 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,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**



(stand)

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

**Response:**    **P** Lord, in your mercy,  
                  **C** hear our prayer.

*(In our prayers today, during a time of silence, pray for those listed below and for others according to their needs)*

**Sympathy:** to the family and friends of Al Schewe

**Thanksgiving:** for the baptism of Anna Irene Shively, daughter of Drew & Michelle Shively; for the baptism of Norah Lucia & Zurina Antus Lang, daughters of Richard & Agatta Lang

**Illness:** Lois Andresen, Gwen Berney, Richard Bock, Kristin Boe, David Bogue, Don Burton, Mary Cook, great-aunt of Sarah Jewell, Sydney Dietrich, Carol Duncan, Mike Edris, Rodney Edwards, Richard Holzer, Renee Johnson, Jason Klomglan, Marcie Lafleur, Ron Muchmore, Mary Olson, Dave Pafford, David Penning, Toby Rees, Gary Rodene, Darlene Strates, friend of Betty Callies, Helen Taylor, Donovan Thorell, Sheri Tipton, Dorothy Vancaster, Joyce Wachal, John Waterman, Darlene White

**Other Prayers:** *Those serving in the military* – Amy Dyer, 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

*“I’ve Found a Friend, O Such a Friend”*

James G. Small & George C. Stebbins  
Kevin Larkowski, *soloist*

## THE TABLE IS PREPARED

(stand)

## OFFERTORY HYMN

*“Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful”*

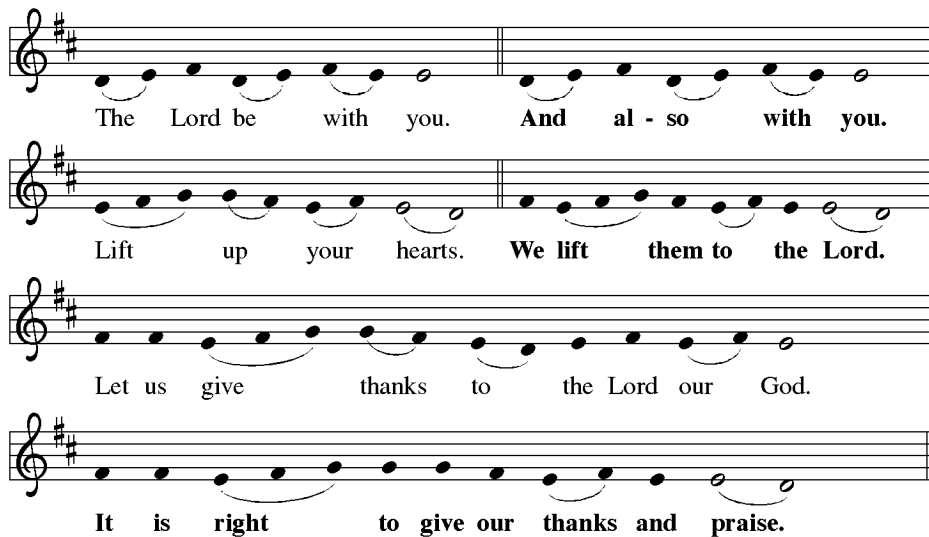
ELW 184

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 love,  
**C** you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table. Receive our lives and the gifts we offer. Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world; for the sake of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

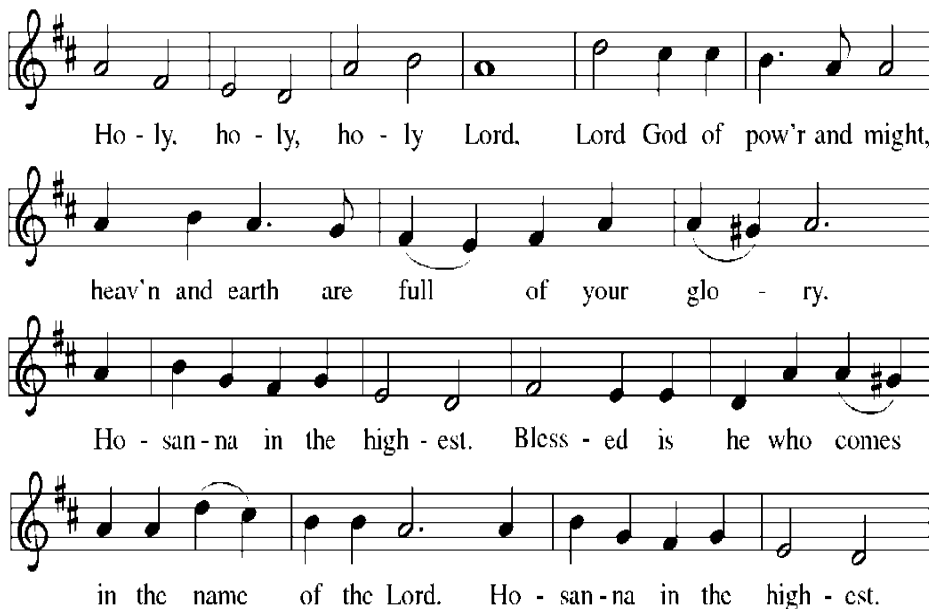
## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING



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 THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

### 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

- ☐ The risen Christ invites us to this table.
- ☑ **Come, eat and be satisfied.**

### 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.*

*Gluten free bread is available; simply request it.*

(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

*“Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”*

ELW 836

1 Joyful, joyful we adore thee,  
God of glory, Lord of love!  
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before thee,  
praising thee, their sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,  
drive the gloom of doubt away.  
Giver of immortal gladness,  
fill us with the light of day.

2 All thy works with joy surround thee,  
earth and heav'n reflect thy rays,  
stars and angels sing around thee,  
center of unbroken praise.  
Field and forest, vale and mountain,  
flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,  
chanting bird, and flowing fountain  
call us to rejoice in thee.

3 Thou art giving and forgiving,  
ever blessing, ever blest,  
wellspring of the joy of living,  
ocean-depth of happy rest!  
Thou our Father, Christ our brother,  
all who live in love are thine;  
teach us how to love each other,  
lift us to the joy divine!

Text: Henry van Dyke, 1852-1922

**1 Jesus loves me! this I know,  
for the Bible tells me so;  
little ones to him belong,  
they are weak, but he is strong.**

*Refrain*

**Yes, Jesus loves me,  
yes, Jesus loves me,  
yes, Jesus loves me,  
the Bible tells me so.**

**2 Jesus loves me! he who died  
heaven's gates to open wide;  
he will wash away my sin,  
let his little child come in. *Refrain***

**3 Jesus loves me! he will stay  
close beside me all the way;  
when at last I come to die,  
he will take me home on high. *Refrain***

Text: Anna B. Warner, 1820-1915, alt.

## COMMUNION BLESSING

*(stand)*

### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

- ☞** Wellspring of joy,  
**☞** through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love will bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# SENDING

## BLESSING

- ☞ May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

## THREE-FOLD AMEN

## HYMN

*“Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love”*

**ELW 708**

### *Refrain*

**Jesu, Jesu,  
fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve  
the neighbors we have from you.**

- 1 Kneels at the feet of his friends,  
silently washes their feet,  
master who acts as a slave to them.**

*Refrain*

- 2 Neighbors are wealthy and poor,  
varied in color and race,  
neighbors are near us and far away.**

*Refrain*

- 3 These are the ones we will serve,  
these are the ones we will love;  
all these are neighbors to us and you.**

*Refrain*

- 4 Kneel at the feet of our friends,  
silently washing their feet:  
this is the way we will live with you.**

*Refrain*

Text: Tom Colvin, 1925-2000, alt.

Text © 1969 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188.

## DISMISSAL

- ☞ Alleluia! Christ is risen.

☞ **Christ is risen indeed Alleluia!**

- ☞ The worship has ended. The service begins.

☞ **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

## POSTLUDE

*Mark Jones, organ*

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Join us in celebrating our High School Graduates on Sunday, May 16!

Charles Campbell

Morgan Gardner

Bryce Griger

Brooks Hinricks

Rahn Johnson

Anna Kidder

Jackson Lawrence

Zachary Martens

Cameron Miller

Abigail Rigas

As you enter the church to worship on this day, plan for some time to watch the short video of the High School Seniors in the Fellowship Hall. Due to the fact that we will not be having a reception, you are encouraged to bring a note of congratulations. Before heading into the sanctuary for worship, place your notes in the bags marked for each graduate. During the service, we will share a time of blessing for the graduates. We give thanks to the Kountze Quilting Group that has made a quilt for each one. We give God thanks and praise for what has been learned and presence and care for the journey that awaits!



## 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](http://www.kmlchurch.org)

May 8 & 9, 2021

## Kountze Food Pantry

### 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**

The Kountze Food Pantry is collecting the following items: reusable shopping bags, toilet paper, cereal, and full-sized hygiene products. Please place your donated items in the shopping cart as you enter for church, in the donation box in the Fellowship Hall, or in the church office. Your contributions are greatly appreciated! If you are able to volunteer, please sign up by using the link below:  
<https://form.jotform.com/200834787701155>

## Sponsor Our Youth on the 2021

### KMLC Summer Youth Trip to Tulsa, Oklahoma

Please consider sponsoring the 2021 Summer Youth Trip. Your donation can be placed in the offering or mail it to the church office. Make sure you mark in the memo that it is for the Mission Trip Sponsorship. Another option to give is to visit [www.kmlchurch.org](http://www.kmlchurch.org) and click on "Online Giving" to donate on the web! Again, you will find in the section for Children and Youth Ministries the line item for Mission Trip Sponsorship. Our gift back to you will be a time to gather and share our experience of this trip with you. It would be most helpful to receive all donations by June 1. Thanks for your consideration! If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Shari at [shari@kmlchurch.org](mailto:shari@kmlchurch.org) or 402-341-7761.

### Attendance and Giving

**Saturday Attendance:** 29

**Sunday Attendance: 9:00:** 86

**Wednesday Attendance:** 10

**Total:** 125

**Streaming Attendance:**

**Cox Cable Attendance:** 252

**Pantry Guests Served:** 731

**Medical Clinic Guests Served:** 18

**Offering:**

\$8,888.00 (Regular) \$6,931.26 (Specials)

\$909.50 (Debt Reduction)

## Wednesday Worship

**12:15 PM**

Our midweek Eucharist has resumed. You do not need to pre-register. Enter through the Farnam Street doors to the Sanctuary.

## Home Devotion on Generosity for the 7 Weeks of Easter

During the Easter Season, the Live it Out resource from the Nebraska Synod and the ELCA Generosity Project, have provided a faith formation at home resource for you to use. It is provided to help in Growing God's Generous Generations. For seven weeks, a resource for you to work through on your own or with others in your home, will be provided. It centers our attention on God's generosity to us and our response to God's graciousness. Go to <https://www.elca.org/generosityproject> for more information. Go to: <https://files.constantcontact.com/8c919081201/297cafde-ffb5-420d-9875-b2d393491ad4.pdf> for week 5.

## Today at Kountze

**Altar Flowers** are given to the glory of God in memory of Jean Holcombe given by her family

## Youth Forum

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

All 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Graders are invited to join us!

We will meet in person in the Youth Room and on Zoom each week

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Bible Ponderings
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: High School Hang Out
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Serving in the World
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Host Middle School Hangout
- 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Adventures (if on Zoom, we will carry you along with us)

Contact Pastor Shari (402-341-7761 or [shari@kmlchurch.org](mailto: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.

## Love one another.

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

Sunday	John 15:9-17	Love one another
Monday	Acts 10:44-48	Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit
Tuesday	1 John 5:1-6	Faith conquers the world
Wednesday	Romans 12:9-21	Love with sincerity
Thursday	Luke 24:44-53	Jesus ascends to heaven
Friday	Leviticus 19:17-18, 33-36	Ritual and moral holiness
Saturday	Psalms 98	Make a joyful noise
Sunday	John 17:6-19	Christ's prayer for his disciples



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*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* **John 15:12 (NRSV)**

### A Prayer for the Week:

Gracious and loving God, give us the faith and courage to love one another as you have loved us through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Mealtime Prayer:

Almighty God, we thank you for this food; may it strengthen us to love others as you have loved us through Christ Jesus. Amen.

### A Blessing to Give:

May your love for God and one another give you joy that knows no end.

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

- What makes it easy to love others? What makes it hard?
- How does Jesus' unconditional love show us the importance of loving others?
- How does Jesus' life, death, and resurrection show us what true love is all about?

*Read:* John 15:9-17.

This passage intimately connects a relationship of Jesus and "the Father" with Jesus' own followers. The relationship is woven together through the language of commandments and love, and the two are brought together in verse 12: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." The Gospel of John does not have the "Great Commandment" dialog as in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. However, the theme here is the same: love God and love neighbor. The emphasis in John is that love is the way to have an enduring relationship with God and with brothers and sisters in the faith, those whom Jesus calls "friends." The word for friends in Greek is "loved ones." Love—not judgment and ridicule—is how Jesus relates to us. It is how we, as Jesus' friends, are to approach the world so that our joy may be complete. How does love change our relationship with others? How does a

commitment to love others change us?

*Pray:* **Loving God, we thank you for showing us the depth of your love for us through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of your Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**

In the Bible, love is more than an emotion. Love is a commitment to care for others with our whole being. Conflict can get in the way of this love. Bringing God into our conflicted relationships can be a difference maker. This week think of those you have a conflict or tensions with, and pray to God for a clean and loving heart to reconcile your relationships.

The theme this week is "Love one another." May 9 is observed as Mother's Day in the United States. Reflect on the women in your life who have loved and cared for you. Think or talk about what you learned from them and how you show love to others. Pray: **Dear God, thank you for your love. Thank you for [name women who have cared for you]. Give us courage to love all people as you have loved us. Amen.**

**NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1  
1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19**