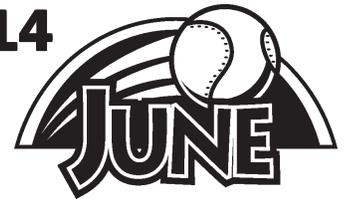


# Trinity Tribune

Trinity Lutheran Church ✠ Paola, Kansas

2014



## From the PASTOR

Several people have asked about the movie "Heaven Is For Real," based on a book with the same title. What should we think of those who have had such "near death" incidents and say that they had a vision of heaven, or actually went to heaven and returned?

In the case of "Heaven Is For Real," the boy who had the experience says correctly that only those who trust in Christ will go to heaven. However, in contrast, many other such incidents often seem to have one thing in common that automatically disqualifies them as legitimate. Generally, those making such claims say that in their vision or experience of heaven they learned that it doesn't really matter what you believe, or which religion you follow—everyone goes to heaven, regardless.

However, Jesus proclaims, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). So, in all those cases where the claim contradicts this emphatic teaching of our Lord, we can immediately conclude that the reported experience must be either:

A) An *hallucination*, perhaps brought on by physical factors such as anesthesia or lack of oxygen;

B) A *deception of the devil*, whom we are told "masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14);

C) A *deliberate fraud*, either to promote false teaching, or by those "who think that godliness is a means to financial gain" (1 Timothy 6:5).

This judgment would also extend to any vision or experience that in any way contradicts any teaching of Scripture. For, the Apostle Paul states: "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:8-9).

It is, however, possible for Christians to receive from the Lord a genuine, special vision of heaven. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, had a vision of heaven just before his death: "Look! I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" (Acts 7:56). The church father Augustine described an out-of-body experience he and his mother had together just before her death.

In 2nd Corinthians, Paul mentions a special vision of heaven that he was granted: "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

The traditional "rule of thumb" for such visions is that they may be held by the person receiving them as genuine revelations from God, but only if they do not either contradict or add to the teachings of Scripture. This is based on passages that strictly forbid either taking away from or adding to the teachings of Scripture, such as the closing verses of the Bible: "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will

add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

Based on such warnings, forbidding us to put anything else on a par with Scripture, the second part of the "rule of thumb" for such visions is that they are applicable *only to the person receiving them*. Even if it may be a legitimate, true vision from God, it is only for that person, and cannot be extended to anyone else. No one else, aside from the person receiving such a private revelation, should base their faith, hope, or any belief or action on such a vision.

The natural inclination after having such a vision would be to "spread the word." But, the only word that Christians are commanded to spread is the Word of God, and therefore Christians receiving such a vision should not attempt to convince others about it. Even Paul does not give any details at all about his own vision of heaven, but rather says he experienced "things that man is not permitted to tell" (2 Corinthians 12:4).

This "rule of thumb" is actually stated quite well in the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church: "Throughout the ages, there have been so-called 'private' revelations . . . They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation. . . Christian faith cannot accept 'revelations' that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment . . . The Son is His Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after Him."

With regard to whether people in fact actually die, go to heaven, and return, that seems to be ruled out by several passages of Scripture, such as:

"No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came from heaven—the Son of Man" (John 3:13);

"It is appointed for men to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Finally, our Lord gives a very instructive teaching about this whole issue in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The rich man, who is in hell, begs, "Send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment."

What he's asking for is Lazarus to have a dramatic "near death experience," coming back from heaven, so that his brothers will be so amazed by Lazarus' astounding testimony that they will repent and be converted. But, the reply is, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them."

And that is where we too must find our assurance of salvation and upon which we must base our faith, the message which God inspired "Moses and the Prophets" to write for us in the Holy Bible. As the Apostle Peter says, "We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

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## Trinity Tribune

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Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

In the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders, Jesus declares, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24-27). The Word of God alone is the solid rock upon which to build your faith and your hope for eternal life. As Paul says, "So that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Corinthians 2:5). All supposed revelation apart from the Bible is, as the hymn says, "sinking sand" (*Lutheran Service Book*, 575), upon which the foolish man in the parable built his house, "and it fell with a great crash."

What should we think specifically about the book and movie "Heaven Is For Real"? Ironically, if it actually was an hallucination, due to the lack of oxygen, anesthesia, and 104-degree fever the boy was suffering during the incident, it may be that our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod indirectly suggested some elements of his reported vision. For, although his father is a Wesleyan minister, he mentions in the book that his son particularly loved the Arch book series of children's Bible stories, published by our Concordia Publishing House, which they would read together over and over again. It turns out that the descriptions the boy gives of angels, Jesus, and many other aspects of his reported vision of heaven bear a striking resemblance to the imaginative illustrations found in these Arch books.

However, as noted above, in contrast to many other such visions, this boy properly maintains that only those who trust in Christ will go to heaven (though unfortunately that is not stressed in the movie). So, it is possible that he had a genuine divine vision—but *only for him*.

As entertainment, the movie may be an interesting, dramatic account of his family's experiences following his vision. But, even if genuine, *his* vision was never intended by God to be *your* vision. Do not look to his story in any way to confirm your faith, or substantiate or supplement the teachings of Scripture.

We don't need someone to go to heaven and return to tell us what heaven is like. Because, as we confess in the Nicene Creed, it was for that very purpose Jesus Himself already "came down from heaven . . . and was made man." As the Gospel of John says: "We have seen His glory, the glory of the only-begotten Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . No one has ever seen God, but the only-begotten Son, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known" (John 1:14, 18).

Pastor Kevin Vogts



### *Sermon Topics for June*

June 1

*"To Each One of Us Grace Has Been  
Given as Christ Apportioned It"  
Ephesians 4:7-13*

June 8

*"God's Grief Counselor"  
John 16:6-7*

June 15

*"The Triple Blessing of the Lord"  
Numbers 6:24-26*

June 22

*"You Are Worth More"  
Matthew 10:29-31*

June 29

*"A New Life"  
Romans 6:1-4*



## Youth Planning Meeting June 1

All youth in or entering grades 6-12 are invited to a youth planning meeting on Sunday, June 1 at 5:00pm. We'll begin with a BBQ; hamburgers and hot dogs provided, please bring a side dish or dessert. The youth will then plan activities for the summer.



We list birthdays and anniversaries in the newsletter each month and the bulletin each week. However, our records may not be complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the Church Office at 849-3344 or email Church Secretary Stacey Elkinton at blocktlc@midwest-connections.com.

- Kelsey Davis.....June 1
- Jessica Thoden.....June 1
- Sara Oberheide.....June 1
- Michele Prothe.....June 1
- David Koelsch.....June 2
- Arlin Prothe.....June 4
- Jamey Kaiser.....June 4
- Samantha Ferrell.....June 5



**First Lutheran Church** invites you to the Sea of Galilee for a musical, fun filled, and faith filled week of learning about ...

## Jesus' love, power, and Amazing Grace!

**Who:** Children age 3 through grade 5  
**What:** FLC VBS 2014

**When:** June 9-13, 9:00 am to Noon  
**Where:** First Lutheran Church  
401 E. Piankishaw, Paola, KS

Register online @ [www.firstlutheran-paola.org](http://www.firstlutheran-paola.org)

Family Night  
June 12  
5:30 - 7:00



or scan here!



- Keith Kreisel.....June 5
- Linda Prothe.....June 5
- Lois Rausch.....June 5
- Lance Stewart.....June 5
- Rhonda Kerr.....June 6
- Kendra Fuller.....June 7
- Kendra Hall.....June 9
- Madison Wood.....June 10
- Ed Reyelts.....June 13
- Chris Carstens.....June 14
- Ethan Debrick.....June 14

- Leland Prothe.....June 14
- Kathy Hall.....June 15
- Cary Prothe.....June 15
- Kevin Prothe.....June 15
- Michelle Jones.....June 16
- Bailey Kaiser.....June 17
- Theresa Kettler.....June 18
- Richard Honn.....June 19
- Paul Brack.....June 20
- Judy Minden.....June 20
- Kim Maisch.....June 21

- Jon Wendte.....June 21
- Greg Brandt.....June 22
- Beth Curry.....June 22
- Vernon Prothe.....June 22
- Tina Edwards.....June 24
- Beth Herrs.....June 25
- Rich Wood.....June 25
- Kyia Fuller.....June 26
- Donna Prothe.....June 26
- Allison Wood.....June 26
- George Holtz.....June 27
- Devin Bruce.....June 29
- Betty Cline.....June 29
- Garry Block.....June 30
- Raymond Kettler.....June 30
- Vivian Wilson.....June 30

June 3.....Emerson & Wilda Bunch  
(58 years)

June 4.....James & Rhonda Prothe  
(9 years)

June 9.....Jeff & Jamie Ennett  
(12 years)

June 9.....Glenn & Michele Minden  
(13 years)

June 9.....Dave & Phyllis Trickett  
(47 years)

June 10.....Chris & Lana Kettler  
(36 years)

June 10.....Rolland & Betty Prothe  
(42 years)

June 11.....Bruce & Gale Nowasell  
(26 years)

June 13.....Rick & Connie Holte  
(16 years)

June 14.....Jim & Sharon Prothe  
(34 years)

June 18....David & Lorranda Baldrige  
(9 years)

June 21.....David & Samantha Minden  
(6 years)

June 21.....Darrell & Kathy Peckman  
(40 years)

June 22.....Clint & Michelle Haley  
(12 years)

June 23.....Mark & Stacey Elkinton  
(13 years)

June 24.....Clinton & Roberta Peckman  
(25 years)

June 25.....George & Nancy Honn  
(26 years)

June 28.....Loren & Barbara Herrs  
( 45 years)



*Growing with God* is the theme for our Summer Sunday School during June, July, and August. In addition to Bible stories and singing the children will enjoy making fun crafts. Bring your children this summer on Sundays at 9:00am for *Growing with God*.



“Gangway to Galilee” is the theme for Vacation Bible School at First Lutheran Church, Paola, Monday thru Friday, June 9-13, from 9:00am to Noon. Children and volunteers from Trinity are invited to participate!

Student and volunteer registration forms are on the counter in our Church Office. Just fill out and leave on desk in Church Office. Or register online at [www.firstlutheran-paola.org](http://www.firstlutheran-paola.org).



- June 1 ..... Olivia Mitchell
- June 8 ..... Evan Kettler
- June 15 ..... Luke Elkinton
- June 22 ..... Karlie McMullin
- June 29 ..... Olivia Mitchell



Thank you to everyone who helped with the church cleanup day on May 17. We had a good turnout and everything looks great inside and outside the church!

Thanks also to the family of Teresa Elliott for the donation in her memory of a new corpus of Christ’s body for our altar cross. (The original had been removed because the silver plating was worn and an arm was broken.)



Our congregation helps support these missionaries sent out by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through our mission contributions. Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services—and you are encouraged to remember in your personal prayers—specific missionaries around the world who are supported in this way by our congregation.

June 1  
Rev. Micah & Robin Wildauer  
Togo

June 8  
Denise Schlesselman  
Czech Republic

June 15  
Rev. Stephen & Maggie Oliver  
Taiwan

June 22  
Daniel Fickenscher  
Dominican Republic

June 29  
Rev. Roger and Amy James  
Sri Lanka



The German edition of Martin Luther's collected writings includes 127 oversized volumes, stretching over 40 feet on a library shelf! For the American Edition, only the primary documents were selected and translated into English. Begun in the 1950's as a joint project of Concordia Publishing House and Fortress Press, so far 58 of the projected 82 volumes have been published.

Our Church Library now has a collection of 38 of these volumes of Luther's Works. They were purchased used, and so may have some markings or be inscribed with the original owners' names. Over time we will eventually acquire an entire set for our Church Library as additional used volumes become available at a reasonable cost.

Because his writing coincided with the invention of the printing press, Luther became the very first best-selling author in history. His works quickly spread and had an enormous impact, not only on the Church, but in all aspects of society. You will be fascinated by browsing through the brilliant writings of the founding father of the Lutheran Church.

To check out a book from the Church Library just note your name and the book title and date borrowed on the check-out sheet on the clipboard which is on the library shelves.



## Summer Bible Study

During the summer we will continue our study in Adult Bible Class on *The Week that Changed the World*. In this fascinating study we are exploring the events of Holy Week, which are so central to our faith, using a booklet that shows side-by-side the accounts of these events from the four Gospels.

You are invited to join in on Sundays at 9:00am in the Overflow to grow in your faith, and your understanding of the real significance of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection and *The Week That Changed the World*.



Thank you to all those providing snacks for Coffee Hour! Most of the summer remains open for coffee hour hosts. Could you—individual, family, or group—serve snacks sometime after worship?

There is a sign-up sheet for the rest of the year on the table with the snacks. Our Generations group has generously agreed to provide and prepare the coffee and juice each week! So those signing up are only asked to provide some treat. Consider signing up for special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries.

June 8  
Karen Garrison

June 15  
Linda Prothe

June 1, 22, 29  
Need Volunteers



by Deaconess Deborah Rockrohr

My husband, Rev. Dr. Carl Rockrohr, and I have been living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia since July, 2013. We came at the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) sudden and urgent request for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to send someone to help at Mekane Yesus Seminary (MYS), its central seminary located in Addis Ababa.

Carl is the Dean of Theology at MYS. I am assisting at MYS by supervising Master of Arts theses and lecturing in the thesis/research support workshops held periodically throughout the year. But my primary task through the end of May is learning Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia.

Language learning has provided unique insights into the people and culture of Ethiopia. Prefixes and suffixes to verbs, adjectives, and nouns recognize the gender, plurality, and even respectful status of both the speaker and the listener; truly, relationships and communication are highly valued in this culture! The vocabulary provides additional insight.

For example, the word *meskel*, which is a noun meaning cross, is also a verb which means "to hang" (like, hang a picture on the wall). What amazing symbolism is tied up in that simple word, *meskel*, as we think not only of the cross on which Christ died, but of Him hanging there, suffering in our place and making full payment for our sin!

Our stay and work here in Ethiopia is interesting from the standpoint that we are working with and within an established Lutheran church—with more than six million members—and yet the

## *Your LCMS Missionaries in Africa*



**Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod missionaries from throughout Africa recently gathered in Kenya for the first all-Africa LCMS missionary conference. Participants included missionaries serving in Ghana, Togo, Kenya, Guinea, South Africa, and Ethiopia. This photo features both the former and current missionaries sponsored by Trinity through the Together in Mission program (TIM). In the center of the back row are Rev. Tim and Beth Heiney, who were sponsored by Trinity for many years and are now retiring after 30 years of missionary service in Africa, most recently in Guinea. In the front row, 3rd & 4th from the left, are Rev. Carl and Deaconess Deborah Rockrohr, missionaries in Ethiopia, whom Trinity is now sponsoring through the TIM program. While many church bodies and other agencies are cutting back on their mission work, the LCMS is actually expanding its mission program and is now one of the largest missionary organizations in the world.**

LCMS is not yet in formal fellowship with the EECMY. We are, however, here at the specific request and invitation of the EECMY to have LCMS personnel come and assist, and we have the opportunity thereby to provide clear Law and Gospel teaching based on Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. In this way, we do our part so that the Gospel light burn brightly, and we thank God for His mercies both to us and to those around us.

In April all the LCMS missionaries working in Africa met in Kenya for four days of Bible study, meetings, prayer, rest, and fellowship. At the retreat we said goodbye to Rev. Tim and Beth Heiney, missionaries in Guinea, who are retiring after 30 years of LCMS missionary service in multiple African countries.

We recalled our time together in Ghana, the Heiney's original field of service. They had been in Ghana for nine years when we joined them in 1993, so that Carl could assist Tim with evangelistic work. The Heineys were

out of the country when war broke out and they could not return to continue their work in Ghana.

When we were able to return after the war, Sampoga, Beth Heiney's former house worker, came to Carl and said, "Pastor, when will you come to my village to baptize the people? Many are ready." "How many are there?" "About 50." Carl later asked the church leaders, "How many villages are like this?" "Very many," they replied.

That answer led to a new plan to quickly review basic catechism instruction in many villages, and bring the gift of Baptism to these people. About eight months later more than 1,200 people were baptized in 10 special services. This was the Lord's harvest after nine years of planting done by Tim and others. Tim and Beth were overjoyed when they first heard from us these details of the Baptism services at the retreat 20 years later.

To God be the glory!



**The past and current missionaries sponsored by Trinity through the Together in Mission program (TIM) were recently reunited at the first all-Africa LCMS missionary conference. Rev. Tim and Beth Heiney (left) were sponsored by Trinity for many years and are now retiring after 30 years of missionary service in Africa, most recently in Guinea. Rev. Carl and Deaconess Deborah Rockrohr (right) are missionaries in Ethiopia, whom Trinity is now sponsoring through the TIM program. The Heineys and Rockrohr are good friends, and in the 1990's served together in Ghana.**