

The

# Mountaineer

A Publication of Mount Zion Lutheran Church Volume 5 No. 8 September 2009

## Where Is Heaven Anyway?

by Tim Ehrlich, self-confessed “heavensgazer”

I am an amateur astronomer. In pursuit of this hobby, I spend a fair amount of time gazing at the “heavens”. Doing this one day, it struck me that we glibly use the word “heavens” to describe everything above us, and I wondered how we can possibly reconcile continuing to use this unscientific term, in the face of everything astronomers have learned since the time of Galileo (1564-1642)?

Not surprisingly, most people probably don’t know the difference between astronomy and astrology. (Why should they, unless one of them is their hobby?) Indeed, there was a time when astrology and astronomy were virtually indistinguishable. Dating back to biblical times, astrologers held positions of influence at most royal courts. Today, the number of people who follow astrology probably outnumber astronomers 100 to 1 or more.

To know the difference it’s necessary to look at the words themselves. *Astrology* is derived from the Greek “astros” for star and “logos” for word or speech. It means to talk about the stars. It was believed that everything above affected everything below. Or as Canadian Oxford puts it, astrology is the “study of the movements and relative positions of celestial bodies interpreted as an influence on human affairs.”

*Astronomy* on the other hand comes from “astros” and “nomos” for law. It is the study of everything in the universe “and its contents beyond the bounds of the Earth’s atmosphere.” Ancient scholars and mystics believed that the world was surrounded by seven concentric spheres or “heavens” which were overseen by various angels and archangels. The seventh, or outermost, sphere was where God Himself ruled over all.

This concept of the universe was forever changed by Nicholas Copernicus who demonstrated (in 1543!) that the earth was not at

have shown that the universe is much more complex and larger than we can possibly imagine.

What was once thought of as the seventh heaven is now the orbit of Saturn. And we now know that there are many, many things beyond that. In fact Voyager 2, a man-made satellite has left our solar system to continue its journey into interstellar space.

If you or I were to ask a passerby where heaven is, he or she would likely point up to the sky and say, “Up there.”

Well, where up there, past the moon? “Yeah....” You mean past the other planets? “Yeah, of course.”

How about past our galaxy? At that point we’d probably have lost them. Astronomy is a hard science. It involves high level math and physics and enormous amounts of technology and computing power to understand what it is we are seeing when we look up at the night sky.

For example, the Hubble Telescope is an optical telescope the size of a school bus orbiting the earth which sends back images of incredible clarity of objects much too distant to observe from earth. We know now that our planet in its

*Continued on Page 3*



### Circle the Date

Pastor Krister’s Installation Service is scheduled for September 20<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m.

# In Mission for Others – Another Perspective

By Dennis Eaton

During the baptism of baby Joshua the assistant lights a candle hands it to the parents and quotes from Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before others, so that they see the good things you do and praise your father in heaven”

Is this an admonition to the child (who has other interests at that moment)? Or to the parents, grandparents, friends, and sponsors who will have a hard time remembering any of the words or prayers invoked that day? Or is it for members of the congregation, who are more interested in the welcoming of a new member and sharing in the excitement of the parents? Has this add-on to the ritual of baptism, like so many other symbols, lost any meaning or significance?

Sorting through our rituals is difficult, time consuming and perhaps a meaningless exercise. For instance, this teaching from Matthew, “Let your light shine before others....” Does this say anything of significance to me here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

My first response is that as a ritualistic/symbolic add-on to a baptism, it is meaningless. However, directed to me as an adult in the quiet of my study, it becomes quite interesting and filled with meaning.

We are admonished by Jesus not only to be ‘good’ but rather to ‘do good’ and to do it in such a way that others will recognize that this is extraordinary. Mother Theresa immediately comes to mind, or the founder of L’Arche, Jean Vanier both whom would be recognized as having done extraordinary ‘good’.

Yet as I read the newspapers, in-depth magazine and journal articles, listen to the news and watch TV, I see far less “doing good” than one would expect in a world filled with misery.

As a faith based community, our guide is this man Jesus whom we can hardly describe as a meek and mild non-involved leader.

If we met Him today we would class Him as a meddler, espousing impossibilities, interfering with our lives, calling into question our beliefs and championing those we have hidden or ignored. He was a radical, and like the Romans we would consider him a pain in the posterior!

To all us good people He was asking, even demanding, that we give much more of ourselves to life itself, to humanity.

***To all us good people He was asking, even demanding, that we give much more of ourselves to life itself, to humanity.***

His intent was for us to change the world for the better not just sustain it as it is.

Using the “Kingdom of God” analogy Jesus posited that the perfect world would be as if God was the ruler instead of the Romans. But who would be the minions, who would make the machinery work? Can you imagine a government run only by Christians? Would these be the radical right Christians or the liberal left, the Pentecosts or the

Lutherans or the Baptists or the Catholics?

Other countries have experienced rule by faith groups either by choice or through conflict. Unfortunately it has always resulted in radical decrees, dictatorships, injustices or oppression. Jesus, though a radical was not a revolutionary. He did not encourage an uprising against the Romans, or to ‘take up arms’ or to become terrorists. Instead he consistently spoke about how we should live our lives in the here and now.

How then do we bridge from ‘being good’ to ‘doing good’ to bringing about the ‘kingdom of god’ (in the good sense)? .

Try this on. The Kingdom of God Jesus is describing is a metaphor for a world without poverty, or injustice, without 40 million Americans having no health insurance or a world where Canadian aboriginals do not have to be worried about clean water in their northern communities and where governments make decisions that assist all people, where personal attacks are a thing of the past and decisions are made for the good of the nation and not the good of the party. Perhaps this is why there is such an outpouring of support for President Obama in the last election. People the world over could see a glimmer (rightly or wrongly) of what could be and should be.

What then is our role? Clearly to “be good” and “do good”, but then something else. If the “they” when we say, “they need to do something” are really us, and our leader is a radical, how can we not also be radical?

We are reminded again by the quote from Matthew, “Let your light so shine...” To what extent are you and I concerned about poverty in our own community, about clean water in aboriginal communities, unemployment and job loss for those who are at an age when they never again will have a permanent job and governments more concerned about their longevity than their concern for the people? To what extent are you and I concerned about school dropouts, children with dysfunctional parents, children forced to become child soldiers, cities, towns and villages with no clean water, entire continents considered a failure? And to what extent are you and I prepared to let our light shine before people in an extraordinary way?

We must do what we can, and more, with the talents each of us has based on our devotion to and our inspiration from Jesus. And as an aside, age in no way restricts what we can do. From being active in the community, writing letters, informing others of actions that need to be taken, advocating for those who need our support, calling attention to injustices and advocating for solutions. The list is endless and our action needs to be more than doing good, it needs to be extraordinary doing good.

But aren't I, some would ask, doing enough already? And my response is, no, not nearly enough. None of us, and I include myself, is doing all we could do.

And finally some comments from a very thoughtful person, who emphasizes that he is not a Christian, has not set foot in a church in twenty years, but is very interested in what Christians say and do .....

*From my perspective the Christian imperative is to be fully human. One central aspect of being human is recognizing the humanity of others - or our common humanity. Doing so, should engender empathy for the situation that others find themselves in - and lead to our speaking out in the face of injustice - making justice for all a central concern in our lives and that of our community.*

## Where is Heaven Anyway?

Cont'd from Page 1



solar system is part of a galaxy. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, is part of a group of galaxies which is, in turn, part of a still larger group. The most distant object we have detected sent its light our way 13.4 billion years ago!

So where does that leave heaven? I am reminded of a time when my five-year-old son asked me that. I answered by pointing up. He then asked me, “What if we stand on our heads? Aren't we pointing to that other place?” Now I really had to think.

The answer I gave him then still works for me. I said “Keep pointing up or away from you. There is no real up or down in space. It's more a matter of here and there. We are here and heaven is there.”

“So how far is there?” That's a lot like trying to figure out the biggest number, so I told him to imagine going as far as we can imagine - and then one step farther. “But that's so far,” he complained. My reply to that was and is: “God is God, and nothing is impossible or too far for Him.”

# Judi Reports . . . .

## on the ELCIC National Convention

Judi Harris

There were 167 clergy delegates, 176 lay delegates and 153 registered visitors who convened at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver from June 25 to 28 for the Twelfth Biennial Convention of our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada under the theme “*In Mission for Others: Signs of Hope*”.

I was elected a delegate to this convention by our K-W Conference and subsequently asked to represent Mount. Zion as well. What follows is my personal perspective on the proceedings. As you have opportunity please ask me for more information on matters that interest you.

Since my return several people have asked, “*How was the convention?*” and I have replied that the answer varies from person to person. Those who are of a very conservative theological/biblical persuasion (many of whom refer to themselves as “*Solid Ground*”) would express anger and frustration stemming from their judgment that they were disenfranchised and their voices not heard. Others might simply say that it was not a unified, uplifting, happy gathering as some conventions have been. My own response is one of sadness and concern for our life together in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. How I wish that we could agree on unity with diversity!

At the outset of the business sessions the agenda was adopted and rules of order agreed upon. As in previous conventions a committee called *Reference and Counsel* (chaired by Rev. Dr. Mark Harris) was mandated to consider all petitions that had been forwarded by individuals and congregations. Their recommendation, with rationale provided, in most instances was “*No Action*” and after considerable debate this was upheld by majority vote. Along the way there were efforts made by delegates to sidetrack and manipulate – and several times a ruling by presiding Bishop Susan Johnson (who “knew her

stuff” and led with patience and firmness) was challenged. In each instance the assembly agreed with her ruling.

In her report to the convention Bishop Susan shared the joys and challenges of her first term as national bishop and highlighted some signs of hope that she sees in partnerships, such as that of our ELCIC with the Anglican church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Of great concern is the fact of our ELCIC having about 24% fewer baptized members than when it was formed in 1986 and financial support from congregations to synods to the National Church continuing to decline so that staff and program cuts have been necessary.

There was great applause when John Wolff, chair of Group Services, reported that the \$16 million deficit in the Pension Plan’s Retired Benefit Account will be taken care of by 2013 rather than 2018 as predicted. Reasons for this were provided and congregations thanked for their increased contributions to this fund.

A number of **resolutions were passed** by the convention including one to support peace in the Holy Land, another urging government leaders to support the goals of KYOTOplus and congregations to reduce their own carbon emissions, a third urging concerted efforts to prevent human trafficking (especially at the 2010 Olympics) and a fourth aimed at better stewardship of creation at the 2011 convention.

In addition to 7 business sessions this convention offered an afternoon of educational **forums** on numerous topics, three excellent **Bible studies** led by Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, Fred Hiltz, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and Bishop Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a **Saturday evening gathering** featuring musical

## Letter to the members of Mount Zion

entertainment and some stories of hope, plus several **great worship experiences**.

At this convention both worship and business took place in the War Memorial Gym – worship space in the centre and tables for delegates all around it. The worship space featured large white and green banners suspended from the ceiling and was framed by a number of large parasols with chiming bangles, carried and placed as part of the entrance procession. Services were enhanced by a liturgical dancer, choir, soloists and instrumentalists who shared their talents. At the joyful opening service Philip Melancthon (aka Pastor Richard Hergesheimer), author of *The Augsburg Confession*, made a guest appearance, “interrupting” and quoting from that document at appropriate places; on another day a memorial service honored pastors who have died in the past two years. In contrast to the clapping/dancing/festive celebration which has characterized most closing services, the mood this time round was much more serious and subdued, reflecting, I think, the heaviness of many hearts.

In closing, let me say that in spite of my concern for our life together in the ELCIC some words from this convention lift, inspire and challenge me as they run through my head and heart – words that were sung at the beginning of each worship service: *“People of God, you are called to let your light shine; abound in hope and be filled with peace and joy.”* And to that end I will continue to pray.

It has taken me way too long to write this letter and for that I apologize!

I thought you should know that we were so thrilled to have the youth of Mount Zion be part of Samantha’s Celebration of Life Service! There were several lifelong friendships created as a result of the youth program and gatherings over the years and these relationships were important to her. As no doubt many of you are, I pray for their healing as it is difficult to lose a friend and also to understand why it happened. It is, however, an opportunity to remind us all that God has a plan, a wise plan to bring us into the glories of heaven.

Our neighbours planted a tree in our cul de sac and we asked Pastor Tanya to bless it on the day it was planted. Along with our neighbours, some of the Mount Zion youth were there to witness the finishing touches to the planting and to feed Sam’s tree its first watering. We have many wonderful memories of Sam that we treasure and there are many that depict and tell the story of her life with the church. Thank you for that and thank for remembering us on the prayer list for nearly two years, and the many cards and words of kindness.

Somewhere along the line I read that fear and faith have a lot in common – they are both beliefs that something that hasn’t happened is going to happen. So why not choose the path of faith? And keep hope in your heart as it creates desire for the future, an eternal life with God. Tough times are not about what happens to you but what you do with it. Jesus wants to prepare us for what is to come. Remember, he already knows how and when our lives will end in this our temporal world and therefore, he knows what we need to get through each day.

Romans 15 verse 13 (letter from Paul): “So I pray for you Gentiles that God who gives you hope will keep you happy and full of peace as you believe in him. I pray that God will help you overflow with hope in him though the Holy Spirit’s power within you.”  
Peace and many blessings,

*Joann Brnjas and family*

## Together in Worship

Sunday, September 6

### PENTECOST 14

*Rev. Krister Ulmanis, Preaching*

*Rev. Tanya Ramer, Presiding*

**Holy Communion** 10:00 am

Sunday, September 13

### PENTECOST 15

#### RALLY SUNDAY

*Rev. Tanya Ramer, Preaching*

*Rev. Krister Ulmanis, Presiding*

**Holy Communion** 10:00 am

**Souper Sunday Luncheon** 11:00 am

Sunday, September 20

### PENTECOST 16

*Rev. Krister Ulmanis, Preaching*

*Rev. Tanya Ramer, Presiding*

**Confirmation Introduction Class** 9:00 am

**Holy Communion** 10:00 am

**Pastor Krister's Installation** 3:00 pm

Sunday, September 27

### PENTECOST 17

*Rev. Tanya Ramer, Preaching*

*Rev. Krister Ulmanis, Preaching*

**Holy Communion** 8:45 am

**Confirmation** 9:50 am

**Holy Communion** 10:00 am

## Mount Zion has a new website!



Check out Mount Zion's new website at [www.mzlc.ca](http://www.mzlc.ca).

It has a fresh new look and you will be able to check it for announcements, choir practice times, calendar items, cancellations and such.

## Caring Connections

Betty Behm, R.N. Parish Nurse

Although the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a global flu pandemic, no special precautions are required at this time. The decision to declare a pandemic was not based on the severity of the illness but its spread around the world.

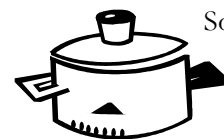
The signs and symptoms of the H1N1 flu virus are similar to seasonal influenza. As with seasonal flu, most people who catch H1N1 flu do not get seriously ill. The current recommendations by the WHO, Health Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and Waterloo-Wellington Public Health are to treat H1N1 flu as if it were the seasonal flu.

H1N1 flu appears to be spreading in a similar way to seasonal influenza, through droplets contained in sneezes and coughs and by hand contact. We encourage everyone in the Mount Zion community - - to do your part to stop the spread of germs:

- Wash or sanitize your hands frequently.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue.
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm, not your hands
- Stay home if you are ill. If you think you may have the flu, call your healthcare provider, or TeleHealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

If you would like more information about the H1N1 flu virus, its symptoms and how to help protect yourself against transmission, information is available at the Health Canada and Waterloo-Wellington Health websites.

## Let's Get the Soup On!



Soup-er Sunday is September 13. If you can help out in any way, please contact me. We need soups to share, veggie trays, bread and butter and lots of help in the kitchen for set-up and serving. Fabulous soups and lots of fun! Betty 519-896-2245

## Dates to Remember in September

### September 13, *Soup-er Sunday*.

Join us in the fellowship hall for the soup luncheon following the service. This is also grandparents day- a time to celebrate with family!

**September 20:** Blood pressure monitoring before or after the service.

## Volunteer Opportunities Available With Open Sesame

Open Sesame Preschool will begin its 40<sup>th</sup> year on Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>. When we began in September 1970 there were three other headstart preschools in K-W that closed due to a lack of volunteers. To date we have been blessed with volunteers who have faithfully returned year after year.

However, this year we need help in our classroom, assisting our teacher on Tuesday or Wednesday mornings from 8:30 – 11:30. A love of children is all you need to qualify. Some volunteers come in every week while others come every other.

If you are a stay at home Mom looking for a volunteer opportunity, Open Sesame is for you. If you have a three year old, that child may accompany you in the classroom. We do have spares available if you are unable to come in, and we close the school when the city school buses are cancelled due to bad weather.

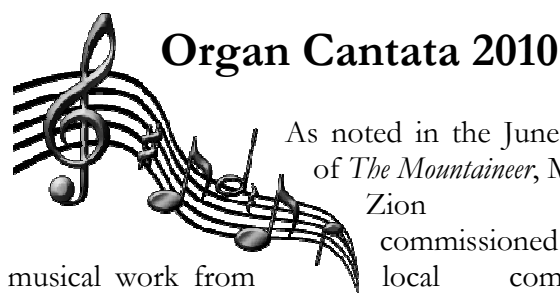
Please give prayerful consideration to giving a “gift of time” to Open Sesame beginning in September until the end of May. Call Carol Ziegler at 519-886-6675 for more information.

### Open Sesame Program receives Grant

I am pleased to report that we received a Global Hunger and Development grant of \$1000.00 from the Eastern Synod Mission Committee. We thank them for continuing to support Mount Zion’s ongoing mission; Open Sesame Headstart Preschool. We know the families in our community who have special needs children are very grateful for being part of our program.

### Seniors’ Birthdays

Mount Zion celebrates our seniors' birthdays by having cake and coffee once a month. If you are not on the birthday list and are 80 or over or turning 80 in 2009 or 2010, please contact Anne Woolner (519-743-2277 or [annewoolner@hotmail.com](mailto:annewoolner@hotmail.com)). Seniors are the foundation of our church and we like to show you our appreciation!



As noted in the June issue of *The Mountaineer*, Mount Zion has commissioned a musical work from local composer Joanne Bender. Joanne has a Master of Music in Composition from the University of Toronto and has arranged and composed music for several local groups, including the K-W Symphony.

The Organ Cantata will be presented on Transfiguration Sunday which occurs in February 2010. The Cantata will be an extended work with several short movements which feature the organ, choir and congregation. In this way the form will be consistent with the historic church cantatas of our Lutheran heritage. The intention is to highlight the 10th anniversary of the installation of our Guilbault-Thérien organ. This special music will also serve to add to the repertoire of choral music for Transfiguration, a festival often overlooked by contemporary composers.

Creating a work of this magnitude specifically for Mount Zion does imply a financial commitment. Congregation members who are interested in participating in the financial support for this project are invited to speak with Scott Knarr, Director of Music.

### The Women’s Auxiliary of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

invites everyone to attend our Annual Meeting to be held at St. John’s Lutheran Church on Wednesday, September 23, 2009.

Guest Speaker: Rev. Cindy Jacobsen

Topic: How Clergywoman, Counselor, and Candidate have Become Expressions of my Christian Vocation

Cost: \$15.00

Come out and enjoy a wonderful day of music, worship and fellowship. Meet the new seminarians and see the beautiful quilts!

## Supporting our Ministry

AS AT: Jul 31, 2009

<u>CURRENT</u>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>
Income	141,234	151,812
Expense	149,521	141,406
Balance	-8,287	10,406

<u>BENEVOLENCE</u>		
Synod	19,380	20,511
Global Hunger	3,813	4,334
Open Sesame	8,655	8,460
Other	15,426	10,110

<u>CAPITAL</u>		
Income	8,181	8,894
Expense	17,952	1,616
Mortgage Income	9,342	9,783
Mortgage Interest	302	781

### Fundraising Event –

Proceeds to "The Samantha Flannigan Foundation for Sarcoma Research"

On October 24, 2009, The Youth from St. James Lutheran will be hosting a fundraising event where all proceeds will go to The Samantha Flannigan Foundation for Sarcoma Cancer.

To be held at the New Dundee Community Centre, the event will feature a Spaghetti Dinner, Silent Auction and a variety of entertainment including a Magic Show by Mount Zion's own John Poole. Tickets are \$15.00 each (\$5.00 for children 10 and under) and will be on sale at Mount. Zion from Jeremy Van Hemmen in September.

If you would like to supply an item for the Silent Auction, sign up to offer your gift of music throughout the evening or would like any further information about the event - please feel free to contact:

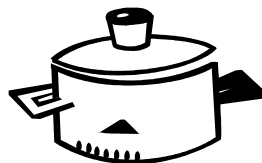
Lorrie Grigg, 519-893-7760  
lorrie.grigg@rogers.com

## For Men Only!

Do you have a 2-3 hours spare time each month? The Friendly Visitor's are in need of some male visitors to minister to our homebound men. Currently we have 3-4 men whose lives would be enriched by your commitment.

Skills required: A desire to serve, a commitment to caring, a listening ear, and a compassionate heart. Please call me if you feel moved to share your time in this way. Betty 519-896-2245

### Wanted Soup Makers



If your soup is something to rave about, make it a star at this year's Souper Sunday on September 13.

Call Betty Behm 896-2245 to make arrangements for your debut as soup chef.

### The Mountaineer

#### Mount Zion Lutheran Church

29 Westmount Road, South Waterloo, On N2L 2K4  
Phone/Fax (519) 886-5820 e-mail: [mtzion@mzlc.ca](mailto:mtzion@mzlc.ca)  
[www.mzlc.ca](http://www.mzlc.ca)

Pastors: Rev Rev. Tanya Ramer.  
Editorial Committee: Dennis Eaton, Karen Gastmeier, Jim Widdecombe, Tim Ehrlich

Please send your comments, ideas and updates to  
[gastmeier@rogers.com](mailto:gastmeier@rogers.com)

**Deadline for October Issue  
September 15, 2009**

