



From Pastor's Desk

The Blessings of Private Confession and Absolution: A Personal Story from a Penitent

By Rev. Jason M. Braaten

Some years ago I called my pastor to make an appointment for individual confession and absolution. Like many other Lutherans, I'd never done that before. You must understand that I hadn't robbed a bank or been unfaithful to my spouse. In fact, I hadn't sinned any more (or less) that week than usual. I simply desired to hear God's forgiveness, life and salvation proclaimed personally and individually. I learned that individual confession is a valuable pathway, given to us by God, for our spiritual renewal. You might ask, "Why would you want to seek individual confession when the general confession is already a part of the regular church service?"

Jesus instituted individual confession, instructing his church to apply the Gospel individually. Jesus told his disciples, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (John 20:22-23). God sent His disciples, in His name, to speak His forgiveness to penitent sinners. Many Lutherans have treasured the gift of individual confession. In fact, Martin Luther said that participating in the general confession exclusively was really only for the "strongest Christians"! Lutherans believe that individual confession is a comforting supplement to the general confession.

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As I prepared to meet with my pastor, I'll admit that I thought much more deeply about the role of sin in my life than I ordinarily do. I began to review carefully the choices I'd made which prevented me from doing God's will, and I recalled the ways in which I had broken God's Law. I decided that there were really a number of sins troubling my conscience which I wanted to confess. I was confident that when those explicit sins were forgiven in the name of Jesus they would be gone forever.

Perhaps the most difficult part of individual confession was my reluctance to confess my faults in front of my pastor. Ordinarily most of us will do anything we can to have others think well of us. I wondered "what will the pastor think of me if he knows my specific sins and failings?" It was important for me to know that the pastor confesses his sins to another pastor. Therefore I was confident he would understand exactly how I felt and would be there to support and help me, not to judge me.

After all, who better than the pastor knows that we all battle against Satan, the world and our own sinful nature? It was important for me to learn, though, that if it is more difficult for me to name my sins before my pastor than it is to name my sins before Almighty God, I may not have been taking the magnitude of my sin nor the reality of God's wrath seriously enough.

I was relieved to know that there wasn't a "right" way to confess specific sins. I realized that I didn't have to mention every sin I had ever committed, and I also knew that I didn't have to provide all of the details surrounding my sin (God knows all of the facts, but He is pleased and eager to hear me confess the sin to Him).

In individual confession God would have us do away with our pretense and our

sinful pride so that we may speak the truth about our sin. In confession we can't offer rationales for our sin nor can we blame other people. My pastor once said in class, "in confession we're not interested in the extenuating circumstances, we're interested in the sin". When we confess, we give up all our defenses and we stand empty handed and without excuse before God, submitting to the promise of His grace. The only thing we can bring to God in confession is our sin and our contrite spirit.

As the rite began, my pastor knelt with me and I read an excerpt from Psalm 51. As I confessed the several things which troubled me, the pastor remained silent. He asked no questions and made no comments; I was speaking to God in the pastor's presence.

My pastor served as Christ's representative: The pastor heard my confession in the place of God; my pastor's voice spoke Christ's own Word of Absolution; and my pastor's hand raised to confer Christ's blessing. Luther described the pastor's role in individual confession like this: "It is Christ who sits there, Christ who hears, Christ who answers and not a man."

I'll admit that I felt shame; my pride made it difficult for me to speak about my disobedience to God. Yet I realized that Christ had not been ashamed to bear my sins publicly on His atoning cross. Therefore, I knew no sin was too shameful to confess and no sin was too trivial to be forgiven completely and eternally by Christ's perfect love.

God opens our lips to speak and then we must open our ears to hear what Christ would have us learn. After hearing my confession, the pastor spoke about the spiritual consequences of violating God's Law. He offered warning and counsel regarding the sins I had named. Hearing the

Law prepared my heart to hear the Gospel message, shared in the form of Holy Absolution. The pastor stood and asked if I believed that his proclamation of forgiveness was actually God’s forgiveness. I answered, “Yes. I Do.”

Then I listened to Christ, speaking in the voice and person of my pastor as the Holy Absolution was proclaimed. I had the sacred privilege of receiving Christ’s healing and personal acquittal from my sin. My sin had been buried forever in the death of Christ and I had been raised up once again to live out His life within me.

The pastor closed the rite with a benediction. I realized that I had just participated in a miracle of grace and felt genuine awe. I had a keen awareness of God’s presence, His personal love for me as His child, and a feeling of reverent celebration leading to praise and thanksgiving, with the desire for greater service and obedience.

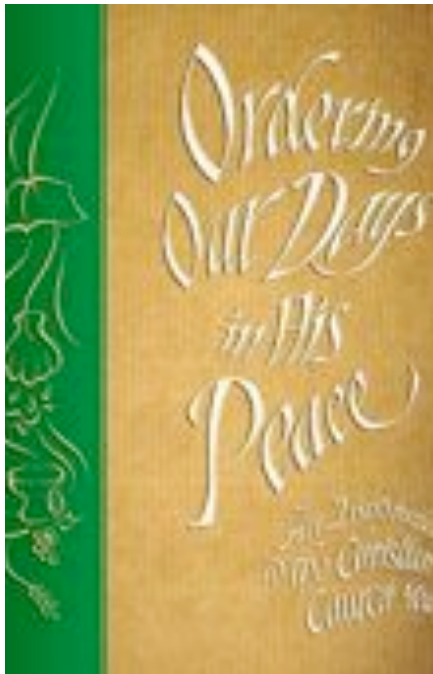
Many Lutherans have never participated in Individual Confession and Absolution. You may be uncertain about your desire or ability to do this, just as I was. I can only reassure you that I have had no regrets about choosing to do it, and I will participate

in the rite again because it has been so rich in personal blessing.

I would encourage you to consider the power and possibilities this Rite offers you. The power in this Rite is Christ’s healing and transforming power to rescue you, renew you and set you free. And if the Son sets you free, Jesus said, you will be free indeed.

~ A Penitent

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The Book of the Month
Ordering Our Days in His
Peace: An Introduction to
the Christian Church Year.

Present the life and work of Jesus and the Church through the times of the Church Year with Ordering Our Days in His Peace.

The Church Year not only orders our days, it teaches us the fundamental narratives of salvation’s story. Through simple language, striking artwork, Biblical and liturgical text, Ordering Our Days walks the reader through the three main sections of the church

year: the Time of Christmas, the Time of Easter, and the Time of the Church. Each part of the Church Year has something new to offer and a new piece of the story to tell.

From the President

Love Your Pastor

By Rev. Matthew C. Harrison

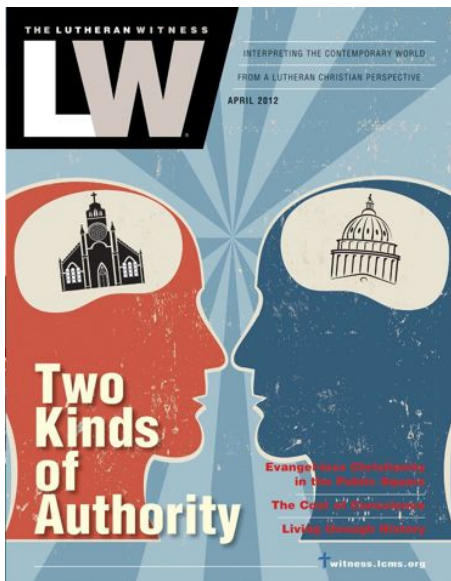
“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17).

“Obey your leaders and submit to them . . .”
 What? In everything? In the color of the carpet in the parish hall? No. The reference is to submission to the clear Word of God. “Remember your teachers, those who spoke the word of God to you” (Heb. 13:7). The pastor wears a stole. He’s yoked, a man under authority. He’s been placed in an office by Christ, through your congregation, not to make you happy. He’s there to bring you joy--eternal joy through faith in the eternal Word of God. “Your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart” (Jer. 15:16). That’s a pastor’s goal for all of us.

But we all have the sinful nature. So, when our pastor must speak the Law, we’re prone to rebel, even become angry. “If it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin” (Rom. 7:7). “Sorry,



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Carl! You and your girlfriend may be seventy years old, but shacking up is wrong. I don't care what the income tax ramifications are!" Can you imagine the pressure, the burden a pastor bears, being the one who must "give an account" for the souls of his flock? On top of that, he has to deal with his own conscience (clearly knowing right from wrong) and face the ire of one man, one woman, a family or even a whole community for saying and doing what is right. No man should face this alone. But pastors often do. It can break a sensitive soul. It can sap his preaching. It can kill his prayer life. It can destroy his home life. It can drive him into loneliness and bring his visitation to a halt. It can cause him to vanish from the community.

What God gives, we receive, including the words and person of our faithful pastor. When the pastor is speaking and teaching in accord with the Word of God, his authority is God's both to call sin what it is and to absolve (John 20:23). "He who hears you hears Me" (Luke 10:16). This authority would seem oppressive or prone to abuse. And it can be and is in its pseudo-forms. Jesus certainly did not "lord it over" anyone, and Paul followed Jesus in this regard. "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy" (2 Cor. 1:24). Peter gives pastors a specific pastoral admonition against coercion of the flock. "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you . . . not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:23).

Have you ever considered how frightening a task it is to know you must speak the Word of God whether folks like it or not? And then to do so as a sinful, emotional, fearful "maggot sack" (as Luther called himself) makes it a super-human burden. It's only possible to carry out the task with the help of Jesus and His grace (2 Tim. 1:6). Such a burden, combined with an eternally important responsibility,



is enough to drive a man into loneliness and despair. But that's how Jesus became the Great Shepherd, and through crosses and only through crosses He continues to make great shepherds of fallible men (Gal. 6:14; 2 Cor. 12:9). And through crosses, He also creates sheep ready to hear the voice of their shepherd and carry each other's burdens (including the pastor's).

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Education Corner

How Do I Speak to My Adult Children About Jesus?

By Rev. Todd Peperkorn

One of the questions that I am often asked as a pastor is how to speak to adult children about Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Every Christian parent, young or old, recognizes that they want their children to believe the Gospel, be baptized, and be connected to the Body of Christ, the Church. This is a part of who we are as Christians, as Saint Paul writes to the Ephesians “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:3-4)

So the question goes something like this: “But what do I do when my children are adults and have either left the Christian faith entirely or the Christian faith is no longer a meaningful part of their lives? I don’t want to drive them away, but it weighs on me deeply. What can I say or what can I do to bring them back to Christ?”

It’s a tough question. There are no simple or stock answers that will fix things, that is for certain. But here are a few ideas to get the conversation started:

DO love your children continuously. Hold them up in prayer, give them your affection, and help them in any way you can. They are your children. Be their parents. Your actions will speak louder than words.

DON’T be afraid. I know, that’s hard. There is a lot at stake. But Christ promises that He will never leave nor forsake His children. If God can raise Jesus from the dead, then surely he can change the hearts of His wayward children here on earth!

DON’T try to argue them back to the Church. Chances are that their falling away from Christ and the Church was the result of years worth of work and attack on Satan’s part. It isn’t so simple as a piece of information is missing. So engaging in an argument will probably just cause a fight and won’t actually get anywhere.

SHOW them how important this is to you. It is easy to want to avoid talk about Christ and the Church because it might get awkward. But if it is important to you, and they love you, they will want to listen to what you have to say. This might mean bringing it up in different ways. Write a letter, send an email. What about a baptismal anniversary card?

OFFER to help with transportation or other barriers, especially if there are grandchildren involved. While it may not be everything, demonstrating that you are willing to sacrifice in order to keep them connected, well, it will make a difference.

I know that this isn’t magical and that it is very hard. But God is merciful, and He wants your children here as much as you do! In the words of St. Paul, “...let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” ([Galatians 6:9](#))

Facts and Figures; Dates and Times

Greeters List

- 3 Jun Joan Vukelich – West
Laverl Byers - East
- 10 Jun Becky Kappes – West
Tim & Teri Pollock – East
- 17 Jun Harold & Irene Wattjes – West
Donna & Gunnar Campbell – East
- 24 Jun Jim Dyer – West
Joan Vukelich – East
- 1 Jul Laverl Byers – West
Ruth Sims – East
- 8 Jul Becky Kappes – West
Tim & Teri Pollock – East
- 15 Jul Harold & Irene Wattjes – West
Donna & Gunnar Campbell – East
- 22 Jul Jim Dyer - West
Ruth Sims – East
- 29 Jul Joan Vukelich - West
Laverl Byers – East

Coffee Committee

- May Arleigh & Mary Jane Jones
- Jun Pastor & Lauren Braaten
- Jul Ruth Sims

- Aug Josh & Jaimee Whitson
- Sep Laverl Byers

Altar Committee

- 3 Jun Janet Stumeier
- 10 Jun Janet Stumeier
- 17 Jun Janet Stumeier
- 24 Jun Wanda Long
- 1 Jul Wanda Long
- 8 Jul Wanda Long
- 15 Jul Delores Ford
- 22 Jul Delores Ford
- 29 Jul Delores Ford

Elder On Duty – Communion

- 3 Jun Jack Appleby
- 10 Jun Jack Appleby
- 17 Jun Jack Appleby
- 24 Jun Josh Whitson
- 1 Jul Josh Whitson
- 8 Jul Josh Whitson
- 15 Jul Greg Nau
- 22 Jul Greg Nau
- 29 Jul Greg Nau

ATTENDANCE			OFFERINGS		
Date	Saturday	Sunday	General	Missions	Building
6 May	21	69	\$3,217.25	\$0.00	\$0.00
13 May	21	81	\$1,987.21	\$0.00	\$180.00
17 May	20	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
20 May	21	71	\$2,147.25	\$0.00	\$20.00
27 May	22	67	\$2,337.05	\$0.00	\$0.00
Subtotal	105	288	\$5,554.30	\$0.00	\$200.00
Total	393		\$5,554.30	\$0.00	\$200.00

June 2012 Church Calendar

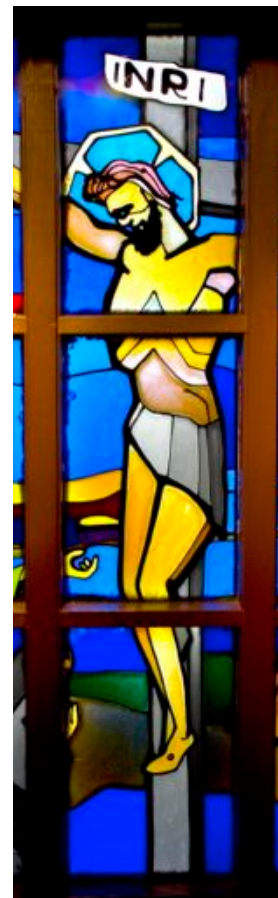
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion</p> <p>10:15 AM Study with Pastor Steve (Baker's 13 year Anniversary of his Ordination)</p>	<p>5: M T W T F S</p> <p>6 7 8 9 10 11 12</p> <p>13 14 15 16 17 18 19</p> <p>20 21 22 23 24 25 26</p> <p>27 28 29 30 31</p> <p>May 2012</p>	<p>5: M T W T F S</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 12 13 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p> <p>29 30 31</p> <p>Jun 2012</p>			<p>1</p> <p>Prayer's Day D+</p>	<p>2</p> <p>9:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p> <p>John Arthur</p>
<p>3</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion</p> <p>10:15 AM Bible Class</p>	<p>4</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>6:00 PM Etern</p> <p>Jacob Wegendorf</p> <p>Kerry A. Terry-Kovacs</p>	<p>5</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>Dakota Ford</p> <p>David & Mark Slaughter</p>	<p>6</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>George & Cindy Gierhart</p>	<p>7</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>Michael Estrom</p> <p>Ryan & Margyn Trevino</p> <p>Carroll & Colores Felt</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Prayer's Day D+</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p>
<p>10</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion</p> <p>10:15 AM Bible Class</p>	<p>11</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>9:00 PM Mt-ws</p> <p>David & Joyce & Alexander</p>	<p>12</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p>	<p>13</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p>	<p>14</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Prayer's Day D+</p> <p>Don & Mary Liben-Burack</p>	<p>16</p> <p>9:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p>
<p>17</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion</p> <p>10:15 AM Bible Class</p> <p>Betty Lehnertz</p> <p>Pastor on Vacation</p>	<p>18</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>9:00 PM Etern</p>	<p>19</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p>	<p>20</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>Coastal Fellowship</p>	<p>21</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>Curry & Marilyn Baker</p> <p>Steve Wegendorf</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Prayer's Day D+</p>	<p>23</p> <p>9:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p> <p>Abigail & Mary Jane Jones</p> <p>Steve & Ann Wegendorf</p>
<p>24</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion</p> <p>10:15 AM Bible Class</p> <p>1:00 PM Youth Group</p> <p>Ann Carroll</p>	<p>25</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>9:00 AM Spanish-wor</p> <p>Devotion</p> <p>Scott Snyder</p>	<p>26</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p>	<p>27</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>Ruth Lewis</p> <p>Wade Cabanalis</p>	<p>28</p> <p>1:30 PM Urban Art Bible Study</p> <p>1:30 AM Mt-ws</p> <p>Ryan & Deborah Robinson</p> <p>Steve & Michelle Trevino</p> <p>Mississippi Roberts</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Prayer's Day D+</p>	<p>30</p> <p>9:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p>

July 2012 Church Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																		
<p>1</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion 10:15 AM Bible Class <i>John & Dawn Stokes</i> <i>Teresa Probst &</i></p>	<p>2</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers 8:00 PM Elders</p>	<p>3</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers Mark Whitson</p>	<p>4</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers <i>Ryan & Jani Stovall</i></p>	<p>5</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Prayer's Day O+ Brad Osborne</p>	<p>7</p> <p>5:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p>																																																																																		
<p>8</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion 10:15 AM Bible Class 11:15 AM Church Council <i>Bruce Rubin</i> <i>Herman Oye</i></p>	<p>9</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers 8:00 PM Mission <i>Marilyn Morn</i></p>	<p>10</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers</p>	<p>11</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers</p>	<p>12</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers <i>Chad & Nancy Fry</i> <i>Anna Muegler</i></p>	<p>13</p> <p>Prayer's Day O+ <i>Guenter Campbush</i> <i>Jack & Mary Appley</i></p>	<p>14</p> <p>5:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p>																																																																																		
<p>15</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion 10:15 AM Bible Class</p>	<p>16</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers 8:00 PM (Loud) with 7:30 PM Elders <i>Theresa Fields</i></p>	<p>17</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers <i>Tanya Berlin</i></p>	<p>18</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers <i>Richard & Jill Zarbar</i></p>	<p>19</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Prayer's Day O+ <i>Janet & Dickie Yermola</i></p>	<p>21</p> <p>5:30 PM Divine Service/Communion</p>																																																																																		
<p>22</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion 10:15 AM Bible Class</p>	<p>23</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers 8:00 AM Spiritual Warfare <i>Carly & Theresa Fields</i> <i>Wayne Arthur</i></p>	<p>24</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers <i>James Hartung</i></p>	<p>25</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers <i>Luzanne Hooy</i> <i>David Boralquist</i> <i>Nicholas Appley</i></p>	<p>26</p> <p>1:30 PM Ladies Aid Bible Study 7:30 AM Movers <i>Michelle Scummes</i></p>	<p>27</p> <p>Hilgenhart/Bear Behavioral Prayer's Day O+ <i>Cindy Ekstone</i> <i>John Stokes</i></p>	<p>28</p> <p>Hilgenhart/Bear Wedding 5:30 PM Divine Service/Communion <i>Megan Hopkins</i></p>																																																																																		
<p>29</p> <p>9:00 AM Divine Service/Communion 10:15 AM Bible Class 7:00 PM Reach Group <i>Jessica Dotka</i></p>	<p>30</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers <i>Richard Spomer</i></p>	<p>31</p> <p>7:30 AM Movers <i>Evon Bushback</i> <i>Glen Scummes</i> <i>Janet Freeman</i></p>	<p>Aug 2012</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td></tr> <tr><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td></tr> </table>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S			1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		<p>Sept 2012</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td></tr> <tr><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td></tr> </table>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S			1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
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Immanuel's stained glass window in the Narthex.