

### GROWING EDGES

October 2004

Last January I promised that since the United States is in an election year I would this fall address the theme "The Kingdoms of This World in Light of the Kingdom of God." I committed myself back then, in part, so I wouldn't back down once the political rhetoric had risen to fever pitch (which it has) and I had become so totally disillusioned by it all (which I have) that I would be tempted to throw up my hands (which I want to do) and proceed on to some less polarizing topic. But, having committed myself to the topic of our civic responsibility I will do my best to say something that I trust will be helpful.

At the outset I had better make a disclaimer: if you are wanting to come away from this essay knowing who to vote for in this presidential election you will most certainly go away disappointed. I would not tell you that even if I had great clarity on the subject (which I do not) since it would remove from you the responsibility of free moral agency, which each one of us is called upon to exercise before God. I do, however, have some theological convictions that surround civic responsibility, and those I am more than happy to share with you—I'll limit myself to four. And perhaps, just perhaps, these four convictions will give you some guidelines for working on election matters in your own region and context.



#### **1. I must give my first and ultimate allegiance to the Kingdom of God and of his Christ.**

No human being, no nation/state, no political party, no religious denomination or institution can have that allegiance; only the one true God. Always and at all times we seek *first* the kingdom of God and the righteousness that is inherent in that kingdom life (Matt. 6:33).

In 1659 Edward Burrough, a British Christian leader, wrote, "We are not for names nor men, nor titles of government, nor are we for this party or against the other . . . but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation, and that goodness, righteousness, meekness, temperance, peace and unity with God, and with one another, that these things may abound."

#### **2. I must always distinguish between authentic patriotism and nationalism.**

Authentic patriotism concerns itself with love of country and pride in its highest ideals. Further, it insists on a clear-eyed understanding of the failings of a country and a call to make them right. Nationalism, on the other hand, is a blind loyalty of country and a refusal to consider any shortcomings or weaknesses in that country. With nationalism "my country" must always be on the side of truth and light; "your country" is always on the other side.

The God-given task of the state is to provide for justice, stability, and peace for all people alike (Romans 13: 1-7). When it does this we commend it; when it fails to do this we critique it and prophetically witness against it. This is authentic patriotism and a true virtue.

#### **3. I must give witness "for life" as consistently and as unambiguously as possible.**

This witness needs to weave its way throughout all human experience, from the womb to the tomb. This means seeking ways to protect the unborn. This means standing against all forms of prejudice which would dehumanize people precious to God. This means working to eliminate poverty and other dehumanizing social conditions. This

means witnessing for peace and reconciliation everywhere possible and laboring hard for genuine alternatives to war. This means seeking out creative alternatives to capital punishment. This means rejecting euthanasia and instead working for a more compassionate end of life environment.

In seeking a deeply consistent “for life” witness our major political parties have not served us well. The Republican party has tended to be a bit better in the arena of personal ethics; the Democratic party has tended to be a bit better in the arena of social ethics. But neither party give us a witness that is directed consistently toward life, and they both seem trapped by positions and constituencies that render them unable to provide any creative leadership in these matters.

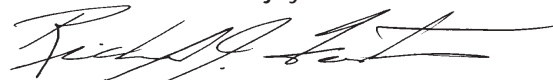
#### **4. I must give special consideration and protection to the weakest, most vulnerable members of society.**

I mention this because the Bible does . . . vigorously, and in doing so it is expressing a deep reality about the heart of God. God really does care for the marginalized, and so should we. Have you ever noticed the enumerable times Scripture singles out for special care the widow, the orphan, the alien, the stranger, the sojourner, the child, the poor. The biblical concern for the powerless and defenseless is consistent and vigorous. This is why James could lay it down as a mark of pure and undefiled religion that we would “care for orphans and widows in their distress” (James 1:27). The late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin once said, “Our moral, political, and economic responsibilities do not stop at the moment of birth. Those who defend the right to life of the weakest among us must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the undocumented immigrant and the unemployed worker.”

How all this is done is a real Gordian knot. Some groups emphasize individual initiative and local community engagement. Others stress the role of government and social institutions. Still others want laws enacted that will ensure that we become a more compassionate society. I must admit that I tend to think that if our hearts were right toward the poor and marginalized any one of these approaches would yield the desired end. But then, that only explains why I am not a politician!

May God be with you as you seek to sort through these matters and make your way to the polls this November 2.

Peace and joy,



Richard J. Foster

### ***GROWING TOGETHER***

For civic responsibility in this election year we suggest five simple tasks. (For those reading and living in other countries facing other political realities, please bear with us and apply these thoughts to your situation as best you can.)

#### **● Vote!!!**

- Take with utmost seriousness the instruction of 1 Peter 2:13-17: “For the Lord’s sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right . . . Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”

- Go to the Internet and look up the Party Platform for both the Democratic and Republican Parties. Add other party platforms in which you have special interest. Seek to read these platform positions in light of your Christian convictions.
- Give special attention to a discipline of listening during the days leading up to the election. Listen to other people state their political convictions and try to understand their point of view, especially when it differs significantly from your own. Say as little as possible yourself.
- Keep your intentions and comments clean and pure. Refrain from exaggeration. Display the utmost respect for all candidates. Refuse to vilify or objectify. Honor Everyone.

– Richard J. Foster

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An annual, tax deductible gift of \$20.00 is welcome to help cover publishing expenses. If you cannot help, we understand. Some will be able to give more and in this way the unity of the Body of Christ will be maintained.

## GOING DEEPER

Given the considerable angst thoughtful Christians often encounter when making election-year decisions, we thought it might be helpful to hear from two who have done much work in applying Christian convictions to civic life. Enjoy, and apply.

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### ***THE MOST REVEREND CHARLES J. CHAPUT, O.F.M.*** ***ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF DENVER***

**Perspective:** Of your convictions, which most significantly influence civic engagement?

**Archbishop Chaput:** Catholics have a very long tradition of social teaching that flows from two sources: Scripture and experience. Catholic “tradition” is simply the memory we develop in living the Christian life and then applying the lessons we learn to the problems of each new generation.

The two pillars of Catholic social thought are the dignity of the individual human person as a child of God, and the common good. They can’t be separated. Nothing that attacks the sanctity of the human person can ultimately serve the common good. Likewise, an overemphasis on individual rights destroys the community. I think anyone who follows Jesus Christ would want to judge every issue in public life in light of these two principles.

**P:** Are there any ways in which you see this election as significantly different from former elections?

**AC:** We’re in the middle of a culture war that seems to get nastier with each election. So every election is important, and active Christian witness in the public square and in the voting booth is vital.

“Separation of Church and state” does not mean—and never meant—excluding religious faith from public life, including the debate over key social and political issues. What’s new in American life is the kind of aggressive secularism that seeks to kick God out of our public vocabulary. If we let that happen in this election, or any election, we deserve what we get.

**P:** Which contemporary issues do you feel are the most pressing for the Christian conscience in deciding which presidential candidate to vote for?

**AC:** Poverty, homelessness, a living wage, immigration justice, the death penalty, international development, peace - all of these issues should press on the Christian conscience. But the right to life is foundational to every other right. Abortion is the central social issue of our time. More than 40 million unborn children have died on the altar of “choice” since 1973. That kind of crime can’t be finessed away by any party’s rhetoric.

**P:** We assume that the Christian has a responsibility to help shape the public debate. In what ways do you see a Christian having a positive civic influence beyond November 2?

**AC:** For a Christian, civic engagement is not an option. It’s a duty that goes along with Christ’s command to “make disciples of all nations” and be leaven in the world. That task doesn’t end the day after elections.

Christians need very consciously to be Christians first and Americans second—not because we don’t love our country, but because we do. If our actions are really guided by a love for Jesus Christ, our nation will inevitably change for the better. We’re the seeds for that. So get involved in local affairs, get involved in the political parties, volunteer organizations and public debates, and don’t be embarrassed by your faith. Make your voice heard—and guide it with the wisdom of the Church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Archbishop Chaput is a member of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, a branch of the order originally founded by St. Francis of Assisi. He is the highest ranking Franciscan in the United States, and is one of only two Native American bishops. The Archbishop has a strong interest in Catholic renewal, and under his leadership the Archdiocese of Denver has become known internationally as a center of vibrant Catholicism.



## LON FENDALL

### FORMER ASSISTANT TO U.S. SENATOR MARK HATFIELD

**Perspective:** Of your convictions, which most significantly influence civic engagement?

**Lon Fendall:** Servant Citizenship. We've all heard the phrase "servant leadership," popularized by Robert Greenleaf. Jesus focused his teaching about servanthood on citizenship as well as leadership more broadly speaking, rejecting the idea of citizenship as manipulating people through political power. Jesus said to his disciples that greatness means serving others and there is every reason to believe from the context that this applies to our civic involvement.

Compassion. It seems almost trite to remind ourselves that the very heart of being followers of Jesus is to love others, especially those who are needy. Why is it then that Christ's followers today do not often challenge the prevailing ethic of selfishness that permeates political discourse? And why is there so little support for public programs that extend help to those in need?

Generosity. For some, April 15 is a day of mourning, as if paying taxes were the greatest imaginable burden for being Americans. The Bible teaches us that we are to give cheerfully to the Lord's work, even with reckless abandon. It seems reasonable that we would rejoice on "Tax Day" as well, as we think about cheerfully giving a portion of our earnings to those in need.

**P:** Are there any ways in which you see this election as significantly different from former elections?

**LF:** This year's campaigns actually look a lot like those to which Americans have become accustomed. We have gotten used to a steady stream of negativism in campaign rhetoric and advertising. Much of it seems spiteful and distorted, but the experts within the campaigns say the attacks work, so the candidates adopt these tactics. But we as believers should ask ourselves if the candidates at every level are persons whose message and strategies are grounded in truth, fairness, and respect.

We have also become accustomed to large amounts being spent on political campaigns, both by the campaign organizations and by the groups that supposedly are independent of the campaigns and do much of their dirty work. Shouldn't we who are attentive to the many needs of Americans and of all the people of the world stand in opposition to the expenditure of such huge amounts on campaigns?

**P:** Which contemporary issues do you feel are the most pressing for the Christian conscience in deciding which presidential candidate to vote for?

**LF:** One of the disappointing things about Americans' voting patterns is the limited focus on personal and family interests. There are many aspects of the U.S. role in global politics that ought to be considered in voting

for a President and members of Congress. But voters seem to care mostly about their own financial security. Do they have a job? Is their "take home" pay higher than when they last voted? Do they feel comfortable about the level of national as well as personal prosperity? Of course we should care a lot about people having jobs and feeling secure, but surely that shouldn't be the sole basis for deciding how to vote. Examples of the broader kinds of questions we ought to be asking before November 2 are: Do the candidates support policies that strengthen families and communities? Are the candidates working toward global cooperation, rather than U.S. dominance in the world? Are the candidates committed to programs of compassion and justice in the U.S. and globally? Are the candidates persons of deep integrity and character?

**P:** We assume that the Christian has a responsibility to help shape the public debate. In what ways do you see a Christian having a positive civic influence beyond November 2?

**LF:** Stay involved with the issues. In Old Testament days, public issues and personal business transactions were discussed in and near the city gates. To be "in the gates" was to be in touch with the issues, to be shaping the discourse, and as in the case of Mordecai, to gather information about proposals that were evil and violent. Today's equivalent of being "in the gates" is spending time in city halls, county courthouses, state capital buildings, and in Washington, DC.

Seek out and support excellent candidates. One cause of apathy and poor voter turnout is the feeling that none of the candidates are outstanding men and women worthy of our support. To the extent that is true, we can do something about it by looking for persons of high character, superb judgment and deep compassion. Some of these persons may never think about running for office, but with our help and encouragement, may become a William Wilberforce of our generation.

Carefully focused prayer. One of the clearest citizenship messages in the Scripture is the call to pray for those in civic leadership. To pray for someone is not to condone all their positions. It is to cover that person with the love of Jesus and to pray that their actions would be just and righteous. I recall that there were those who came to see Senator Mark Hatfield during his years in the Senate, who had no agenda of issues nor personal favors to ask. They simply said, "How can we pray for you?" What a powerful way to be servant citizens!

Lon Fendall is Director of the Center for Global Studies and the Center for Peace and Justice. He received his BA from George Fox University, did graduate work at the University of Ghana and received a PH.D. in History from the University of Oregon. He has founded a college peace center and led peace education internationally. He also served as Legislative Director and Campaign Manager for U.S. Senator Mark Hatfield.



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**The With-God Life** TRANS  
**The Dynamics of Scripture for Christian Spiritual Formation**  
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 featuring  
**Richard J. Foster, Dallas Willard, Tom Oden, Lynda L. Graybeal and others**  
 A *RENOVARÉ* International Conference on Spiritual Renewal

You will receive a full conference registration brochure with the November 2004 *RENOVARÉ Heart-to-Heart Pastoral Letter*.

That you might get a better sense of what to expect if you attend the June 19-22, 2005, *RENOVARÉ* International Conference, *Perspective* asked a few questions of Geoff Cragg, the Steering Committee Chair:

**Perspective:** Who should attend the International Conference and why?

**Geoff Cragg:** You may be a pastor, or lay leader, or otherwise on the journey wanting to go deeper. In touching on "The With-God Life," Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, and a myriad of speakers will illuminate the central role of Scripture for spiritual formation, and it will be really helpful.

I know there are a lot of people *RENOVARÉ* has touched over the years who will gain from this conference. I have talked with churches bringing their staff. I have talked with *RENOVARÉ* Conference alumni who will be there. I have spoken with new churches and organizations that see the need to attend because of the importance of the event.

For leaders, we are planning sessions for exploring how spiritual formation works on a corporate level, especially as it relates to Scripture. These will be led by pastors currently traversing the difficulties of moving from a "program-based church" to a church that centers on spiritual formation.

We are encouraging people to attend and bring one or two friends. This will allow some processing of the "The With-God Life" idea as we unpack the Scriptures together.

**P:** What can a person expect to gain by attending?

**GC:** *RENOVARÉ* always creates a space where people are ministered to, both by the leaders and other attendees. Some receive from the speakers. Some receive from the workshops. Some receive from the worship! Some receive from the times of prayer (corporate or individual). Some receive just because they are among others who think about the deeper things of "The With-God Life."

Those who join us will be blessed and receive. Times of worship, times of silence, times of laughter, times of challenge, and times of introspection are planned. And a word about Denver: it is a wonderful place to host such a conference. There will be time in downtown Denver and, if you plan for it, extra time in the mountains!

**P:** What do you take "The With-God Life" to mean?

**GC:** "The With-God Life" is a way of expressing that God has always been "with" his people. The problem has been that we have, for whatever reason, forgotten it. And often. We forget that God is our constant companion. God is with us on the journey . . . just as he has been on the journeys of those who have gone before us!

We need a fresh look at Scripture. A fresh look at exactly "how" God *was* and *is* with his people. In doing this we see how important his story is and how it intersects our stories. The notion of "The With-God Life" may seem basic, but the more we look the more intriguing it becomes. As we look harder it becomes more and more transformational, a living reality!

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# Persons to Register	Total
_____ x \$179.00 per person— <i>thru May 15, 2005</i>	= \$ _____
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_____ x \$159.00 group rate per person— <i>when 3 or more register together</i>	= \$ _____
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 Hotel rooms available at a special event rate (\$119.00/night) by calling Adams Mark Hotel reservations at 1-800-444-2326. Identify that you would like a room in the *RENOVARÉ* Conference room block.  
 Please send completed registration form(s)—if paying with check, payable to "RENOVARÉ" with "2005 IC" in the memo—to: *RENOVARÉ*, 8 Inverness Dr E, Ste 102, Englewood, CO, 80112, Attn: 2005 IC Registration. Fax to 303-792-0146.

## Thank You!

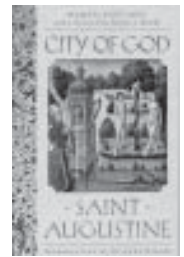
Back in June, as part of the *Heart-to-Heart Pastoral Letter*, Richard shared his concern over RENOVARÉ'S Summer 2004 financial health. The response was fantastic! First off, the 1st bi-annual RENOVARÉ Covenant Retreat—an event on which RENOVARÉ took an extra-ordinary financial risk—was subscribed to the point of break-even. **And second, you, our faithful co-laborers in this work of renewal, donated \$85,000+ to help RENOVARÉ get through the summer months.** We so appreciate your generosity! Thank you. Thank you.

## GOING DEEPER

Because of the importance and difficulty of this topic ("The Kingdoms of this World in Light of the Kingdom of God") I really do want to recommend to you some possible study. We are not the first ones to be faced with these issues and a few resources would help give us some perspective. — Richard J. Foster

The first resource, Augustine's *The City of God*, simply must be mentioned though I am not necessarily encouraging you to buy it. It is a tome and really does deserve the label *magnum opus*. It is a full-blown theological history and I'd recommend seminary training if you are going to tackle the whole of it. I own The Modern Library edition with the magnificent Thomas Merton Introduction but this edition is much too dense and too long for the average reader (well over 800 pages). For the RENOVARÉ office we have ordered copies of the much edited down Image edition (560 pages) if you want to own it.

What I do want to recommend to you is that you check it out of a library and become familiar with selected passages. You may want to read Augustine's *Confessions* first just to acquaint yourself with the heart and soul of this master writer. Then, in coming to *The City of God* proper let me pass on to you the advice of Thomas Merton from his Introduction: "The living heart of the *City* is found in Book Nineteen, and this is the section that will make the most immediate appeal to us today because it is concerned with the theology of peace. However, Book Nineteen cannot be understood all by itself. The best source for solutions to the most pressing problems it will raise is Book Fourteen, where the origin of the two Cities is sketched, in an essay on original sin. Finally, the last Book (Twenty-two), which is perhaps the finest of them all, and a fitting climax to the whole work, will give the reader a broad view of St. Augustine's whole scheme because it describes the end of the City of God, the communal vision of the elect in Paradise, the contemplation which is the life of the 'City of Vision' in heaven and the whole purpose of man's creation."



Another tough read, but one well worth your energy and in a much more manageable size, is *The Politics of Jesus* by John Howard Yoder. This is a rigorous study in Christian social ethics and, in the field, no one has influenced me more than Yoder. His chapters "Christ and Power" and "Revolutionary Subordination" are simply the best pieces written on the subject. It will take you from now until New Years to read *The Politics of Jesus* but the read will make you far better prepared for political engagement in 2005 and beyond.

If you would like the basic themes of Yoder but in a much more popular style then *The Upside-Down Kingdom* by Donald Kraybill is for you. Kraybill, a layman himself, is well-versed in the critical theological issues and gives us a lively discussion of the economic and political implications of Jesus' teachings. I have used this book more than once in college courses and find students are always helped by its passionate and thoughtful message. An excellent investment.



The three books that we really want to focus on for this issue of the *Perspective* and this theme—"The Kingdoms of this World in Light of the Kingdom of God"—are *The Politics of God* and *The Politics of Man* by Jacques Ellul, *The Soul of Politics* by Jim Wallis, and *Citizenship: A Christian Calling* by Lon Fendall.

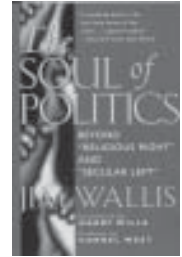


Ellul, the late French Professor of History and Sociology, always provides substance and prophetic insight in what he writes. With an eye constantly on the modern scene, in *The Politics of God* and *The Politics of Man* Ellul wrestles with key questions like:

- Can we fulfil the plan and purpose of God by political means?
- Is it possible to fulfil God's aim and yet to sin against God and incur his judgment?
- Are we in danger of getting out of our depth when we plunge into social action?
- Does the world really take us as seriously as we take ourselves in such matters?
- May there be a time when withdrawal is more effective than action?
- What is the real nature of a prophetic ministry?

Buy this book . . . you will not be disappointed.

Also, I recommend to you *The Soul of Politics* by Jim Wallis. Wallis is a prophetic voice in our day and, as such, is seldom a comfortable read. He unsettles us. He makes us re-evaluate. He jars us out of our comfortable, cliché-ridden world. And that is why his writing and thinking is so valuable to us. *The Soul of Politics* is no exception. This book is a trumpet call for a reintegration of politics and spirituality. Moving beyond "the Religious Right" and "the Secular Left," Wallis argues for a new political morality that combines social justice with personal responsibility, and he looks outside the traditional corridors of power to find the resources for a political movement that will empower the powerless, protect the environment and foster a genuine democracy.



I am quite taken by a new book, *Citizenship: A Christian Calling* by Lon Fendall. Dr. Fendall served for many years as legislative director and campaign manager of U. S. Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon. He is now the Director of the Center for Global Studies and the Center for Peace and Justice at George Fox University near Portland, Oregon. His book, *Citizenship*, weaves together stories from the Bible, the life and writings of the great nineteenth century British politician William Wilberforce, the life and writings of Senator Mark Hatfield, and stories from ordinary people in public life. Fendall's extensive career in the political arena makes him eminently qualified to guide our thinking on this vital subject. *Citizenship* is a useful read and I urge you to secure a copy.

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	The Politics of God and The Politics of Man <i>by Jacques Ellul</i>		\$19.00	
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30 September - 9 October 2004	<b>Various RENOVARE Events</b>	Nairobi, Kenya Africa	Glandion Carney Marti Ensign Donn Thomas	George Renner grenner@maf.or.ke
1-2 October 2004 <i>Primarily for Speakers of Korean</i>	<b>Orange County Regional Conference</b>	Irvine Bethel Korean Church Irvine, California	Richard Foster Brian Kang Joshua Choon Min Kang	Brian Kang 714-529-9190 kang@renovare.org
15-16 October 2004	<b>The With-God Life: Spiritual Formation for the sake of the World</b>	Newport Vineyard Church 102 Baker Street East Costa Mesa, CA. 92626	Richard Foster Todd Hunter Todd Proctor	Terry Smith 303-792-0152 terry@renovare.org
5-6 November 2004	<b>Lexington, Kentucky Regional Conference</b>	Asbury Theological Seminary 204 N Lexington Avenue Wilmore, Kentucky	Richard Foster George Skramstad James Bryan Smith	Wayne Burt 859-858-2047 wayne_burt@asburyseminary.edu
5-6 November 2004	<b>Orlando, Florida Satellite Up-link Regional Conference</b>	Asbury Theological Seminary Orlando, Florida & Gulf Breeze UMC, Gulf Breeze, Florida	Richard Foster George Skramstad James Bryan Smith	Wayne Burt 859-858-2047 wayne_burt@asburyseminary.edu
19-20 November 2004	<b>RENOVARÉ UK &amp; I Streams of Living Water Conference</b>	Monkton & North Prestwick Parish Church Prestwick, Scotland	James Catford, Richard Foster Roy Searle, Roz Stirling	Rev. Canon Philip Noble 0 1292 477108 scottishrenovare@aol.com
21-22 January 2005 <i>Primarily for single Chinese professionals</i>	<b>West Bay Regional Conference</b> "Spiritual Renewal Day-by-Day"	Site To Be Annouced Burlingame, California	Richard Foster George Skramstad Siang-Yang Tan	Jane Yu 408-836-5263 sformation@yahoo.com
4-5 February 2005	<b>Austin, Texas Regional Conference</b>	Red River Church 4425 Red River Street Austin, Texas	Richard Foster George Skramstad RENOVARÉ Team Member	Phillip Gunter 512-218-1011 pwgunter@swbell.net
18-19 February 2005	<b>Jacksonville, Florida Regional Conference</b>	Mandarin Presbyterian Church 12001 Mandarin Road Jacksonville, Florida	Richard Foster George Skramstad James Bryan Smith	Pearl Boles 904-264-2241, ext 209 pboles@opumc.net
8-9 April 2005 <i>Primarily for Speakers of Korean</i>	<b>DC Metro Regional Conference</b>	The Korean Central Pres Church 8526 Amanda Place Vienna, Virginia	Joshua Choon Min Kang Richard Foster Brian Kang	Brian Kang 714-529-9190 kang@renovare.org
22-23 April 2005	<b>Northwestern Virginia Regional Conference</b>	Braddock Street UMC 115 Bolfe Street Winchester, Virginia	Richard Foster George Skramstad RENOVARÉ Team Member	Cindy Zirlott 540-667-3366 formationbsumc@adelphia.net
19-22 June 2005	<b>RENOVARÉ International Conference</b>	Adams Mark Hotel Denver, Colorado	Richard Foster Dallas Willard RENOVARÉ Team & Others	Lyle SmithGraybeal 303-485-0670 lyle@renovare.org

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