

GROWING EDGES

July 2002

How often do we think of God as a creative artist? Usually we are inclined to remember God's sovereignty, his tenderness, power, and love. Yet the very first way God reveals himself in the Bible is as one who creates, who generates an entire world and everything and everyone in it (Gen. 1-2).

The Lord has also shared this creativity with us, as the Genesis account shows. Adam is asked to name God's creatures. Eve becomes the mother of all the living. Later on in Scripture, we discover the memorable image of God as a potter who shapes us according to his own design (Isaiah 29:16; 45:9).

Another way we understand God's creative power is through the way the Bible is written: a powerful succession of visual images, storytelling, and poetry. The God of Israel is a God of pictures and conversations.

How do we see this divinely-given creative spark?

Often we notice it first in our children. First of all comes the miracle of birth itself, a whole new person coming to be, someone who may have his mother's eyes or her father's ears but even so is entirely unique.

As babies become toddlers and small children, we see their delight in creation. We watch them develop their own creative life. Even the smallest children respond to bright colors and are delighted by music. Soon, they begin to make sounds, draw pictures, recognize numbers and letters, arrange things in pleasing patterns. Ordinary objects become playthings. A large box becomes a pretend house; an old pot becomes a drum. Any walk down a school corridor shows us the artistic triumphs of children, depicting the wonders of life: sun, sky, clouds, trees, houses, airplanes, trucks, cars, people.

Everyone is born with this divinely-given creativity, but the creative impulse asserts itself in different ways. Not everyone grows up to be a creative professional: actor, writer, musician, composer, photographer, sculptor, potter, painter, stained-glass maker. Many of us express creativity not through the artistic professions but through problem-solving, inventive business ideas, novel enterprises, organizational and planning skills, inspirational leadership, imaginative parenting and homemaking. While the special gifts of certain creative artists shine out, this "holy creativity" belongs to each of us.

What about faith and creativity?

Especially today, there is a great importance in the work of creative artists who hold a Christian world view. Such writers and artists are engaged in their own faith-journeys and faith-struggles. By representing such experiences in terms of picture and story, they quicken and encourage us. But genuine artists do not offer quick-fix answers and ready solutions. Instead, like Scripture itself, they depict the mystery of suffering, the burden of sin, the baffling character of the human condition. We may draw strength and insight from the subtlety and depth of their experience.

Where do writers draw their inspiration? In my own case I have usually written a book not only to say something, but also believing that something needs to be said. When I discovered Christian prayer as a real resource for my daily life, the idea suddenly popped into my head, "Why doesn't somebody tell people about this?" Of course, it was an outrageous thought, because I knew how many people had already spoken and written about prayer. Yet perhaps I had not been fully attentive. Maybe I had even been skeptical. "Such things happen to other people," I may have thought, "but not to me." Then I realized that this impulse was really a call to write something that would express



my own experience of prayer. At the time I was conceiving the book, I could not fully explain to others what I was doing. I would say, “I want to write a book like the mystics wrote, in which you feel the depth and mystery of prayer.” Or, “My book is going to be something like those sketch-book instruction manuals, the ones that tell you how to draw cats. Because I want to draw a picture of prayer.” I called the book *Clinging: the Experience of Prayer*, and “clinging” was only one of the poetic comparisons and images I used to describe prayer. My hope was to make prayer vivid and real for others as it had suddenly become to me.

I believe that all artists of faith entertain the hope of illuminating the life of grace. Writers and other creative artists stand within The Incarnational Tradition, showing us God’s presence in all the work we do. By the creative works we do and the created works we appreciate, we give glory to God. Our lives are the richer for it.

Blessings,



Emilie Griffin

GROWING TOGETHER

How can we become more aware of our creative gifts? Here are some simple creative exercises worth trying. In some cases they require you to write or draw. In others you may simply be appreciating works of art or music created by others. Try to return to an attitude in which you are not self-critical. Don’t worry about whether you can write or draw proficiently. Instead, concentrate on the pleasure of expressing an idea, or simply seeing the flow of your pen on the page, or the brightness of magic markers on the paper. Be sure you have some good creative tools that are inexpensive—magic markers, newsprint pads, inexpensive paper. (I remember once using a roll of shelf-paper and magic markers when my children were young; it looked like so much fun I had to try it!) Maybe your spiritual formation group or a friend or two can join together to do some special creative exercises, or engage in ways to appreciate your own creativity and that of great artists of faith.

Writing

Remember what Henri Nouwen says about writing as a tool for spiritual development: “Writing is a process in which we discover what lives in us. The writing itself reveals to us what lives in us. The deepest satisfaction of writing is precisely that it opens up new spaces within us of which we were not aware before we began to write.”

- Write new words to a familiar song. “O My Darling Clementine” is a good melody if you can’t think of one. Don’t plan to write about faith; know that you exercise faith in the composing of the words.

- Write a letter to God. Thank him for your creative gifts, and for the gift of your faith.
- Write a brief history of your childhood memories of coming to know God. Can you remember an idea about God that you have outgrown?
- Begin a journal. Choose a fresh composition book and plan to write an entry every day for a week. Make sketches, too, if you like. Read your journal over to yourself or to friends and decide at the end of the week whether to continue.

Designing/Visual Creativity

- Rearrange your desk to make it more attractive or spacious. Get rid of the clutter. Add a picture, a vase of flowers, a lamp. Enjoy your handiwork.
- Arrange a centerpiece of flowers for the day your spiritual formation group meets. Reflect on the beauty and color of the flowers.
- Set the table creatively for a meal. Use an attractive centerpiece or create one.
- Set out a new row of plants in your garden, or arrange potted plants on an indoor shelf.
- Draw a picture of your workplace and reflect on what it may reveal to you about your daily work.
- Draw a picture of something or someone you find beautiful: a flower, a tree, a person.

The *RENOVARÉ Perspective* is published quarterly by the not-for-profit corporation RENOVARÉ, Inc. Organized under the laws of the State of Kansas, it is registered in Colorado as RENOVARÉ Ministries, Inc. Permission to duplicate this newsletter for free distribution is granted. Any quotations or references to it should give proper credit to RENOVARÉ, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, Colorado 80112-5624, USA.

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.

Performing Arts

- Share a favorite music CD with friends. Reflect with them on why it pleases you.
- View a movie that makes you really happy. Two possibilities are *Singin' in the Rain* and *It's a Wonderful Life*.
- Tell simple, familiar stories like "Sleeping Beauty" and "Hansel and Gretel," and enjoy the storytelling.
- Tell Bible stories from memory.

Faith-Reflection with a Work of Art

- Search out a painting or another work of art that has special meaning for you. Spend some time in

appreciation of the work. Then consider writing, or explaining to another person, why this work is so meaningful for you. The late Henri Nouwen had a particular appreciation of Rembrandt's painting, "The Return of the Prodigal Son." I have had a similar experience with Stanley Spencer's painting, "The Resurrection: Cookham," which depicts the general resurrection as it might occur in Spencer's own home village in England.

- Try a similar encounter with great musical works of faith. A CD of great Christian hymns might offer such an opportunity. Handel's "Messiah" in performance or on CD can offer a glimpse of the resurrected life.

Emilie Griffin

CONFERENCE DATES AVAILABLE!

Dates in 2004 available for RENOVARÉ Regional Conferences:

January 30-31 ♦ February 13-14 ♦ March 5-6 ♦ March 19-20 ♦ April 30-May 1
led by Richard Foster, George Skramstad, and one other RENOVARÉ Team Member

Regional Conferences are sponsored by 12 or more churches and Christian organizations which encourage their own constituencies and those from fellowships throughout their region to attend. They are held on Friday evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. for 400 to 600 people.

**To explore holding a RENOVARÉ Regional Conference in your area, contact Lyle SmithGraybeal
Phone: 303-792-0152 ♦ Fax: 303-792-0146 ♦ E-mail: renovare@compuserve.com**

Dates in 2002 available for RENOVARÉ Local Conferences:*

September 21 ♦ October 5 ♦ October 19 ♦ November 2

Speakers Available:

Glandion Carney ♦ Marti Ensign ♦ Roger Fredrikson ♦ Emilie Griffin ♦ Jim Smith ♦ Donn Thomas

Local Conferences are sponsored by 1 or 2 churches which invite the community to participate. They are held on one day (Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or Sunday from 1:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) for typically around 150 people. Costs include speaker's fees and travel expenses, registration materials, and RENOVARÉ overhead.

**To explore holding a RENOVARÉ Local Conference in your area, contact Joan Skulley (Mondays & Fridays)
Phone: 303-792-0152 ♦ Fax: 303-792-0146 ♦ E-mail: renovare@compuserve.com.**

*Dates are negotiable based upon availability of speakers

GROWING PAINS

As this *Perspective* is being compiled, we have just hired Terry Smith to take Lyle SmithGraybeal's position as Conference Coordinator. We're projecting that Terry will be on the job around September 1 at which time Lyle will start training him and developing the position of New Projects Director.

Our apologies for being so late in getting the new design for our web page on-line (www.renovare.org). The work took longer than we had expected. We will work on it this summer with the hope that it will be finished by fall.

EXCERPT FROM LIFE PATH[©]

by Luci Shaw

All kinds of words could be used to describe what keeping a reflective journal will do for the one who writes it; writing a journal regularly will enrich, nourish, mature, heal, develop, broaden, enhance and transform you. No doubt about it, if you become a consistent journal keeper, you will change and be changed.

I could list numbers of well-known journal writers and the titles of their published journals to demonstrate this, among them Augustine's *Confessions*, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, the journals of Lewis and Clark, *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, Blaise Pascal's *Pensées*, Anne Morrow Lindburgh's series of published journals and many others. But maybe two case-histories will serve as examples.

Sharon Earl, a young married woman who spent a week with me in a journal workshop, wrote to me:

The first assignment you gave us, "to write, concretely and honestly, about a relationship," had an enormous impact on me. I decided to write about my sister who died in May. I felt I had dealt with my grief and did not feel particularly emotional as I began to write. I ended up writing my memories of her since her birth (she was four years younger than I).

As I journaled (and journeyed) through her life, I was shocked at the well of grief that gushed through me. I spent a good amount of time in deep, primal sobbing. I began to see patterns in my relationship to her that I hadn't noticed before, and areas of hurt that I'd been afraid to look at.

In my journal process I let myself consciously feel the lack of closeness that pervaded our childhood. As her big sister, I often ignored her, occupied as I was with growing up and being with my own friends. Our four-year gap meant that when she was in high school, I was at college. When she was at college, I was married. Our lives didn't really begin to cross until we both became mothers.

Soon after I became a mother, my husband and I left for Kenya with our child, as missionaries. A month after our arrival, my husband died in a car crash. For the next year, I was grieving, trying to cope as a single parent, and recovering. I also met my second husband, Shep. After we married, I became pregnant again when, BAM!, the news of my sister's diagnosis—acute myeloblastic leukemia—hit me like a blow in the gut. I desperately wanted to be close to her, care for her, be there, make up for lost time, and claim the sisterhood that we should have had. Slowly God began to redeem our relationship in those final days, though my pain distanced me at times. I gave her a mug that said, "My Sister, My Friend," and meant it with all my heart. Later my mother told me that my sister had said, "That mug that Sharon gave me—the sister mug—I wish I could take it to heaven."

But it was through this process of journaling that God became more real for me, and I experienced his healing and forgiveness.

In *The Genesee Diary*, Henri Nouwen, the well-known writer and speaker, tells of his experience during a seven-month stay in a Trappist monastery. As he participated in the daily routines of work and prayer at the Abbey of the Genesee in upstate New York, he kept a journal that reflects all his conflicting desires and questions, his moments of misgiving as well as his joy, and a new sense of integration and expectation, which seems to have come as much from keeping the journal as from the monastic experience itself. Because it was a private journal, never intended for publication, the result was a book of penetrating honesty, no holds barred. I recommend it as a superb model for journal writing. As you read it you can feel Nouwen's growth in self-knowledge and God-knowledge; he was being changed as he wrote.

Here's what Nouwen says about writing in *The Genesee Diary*:

It is a remarkable sensation to see ideas and words flowing so easily, as if they had always been there, waiting.

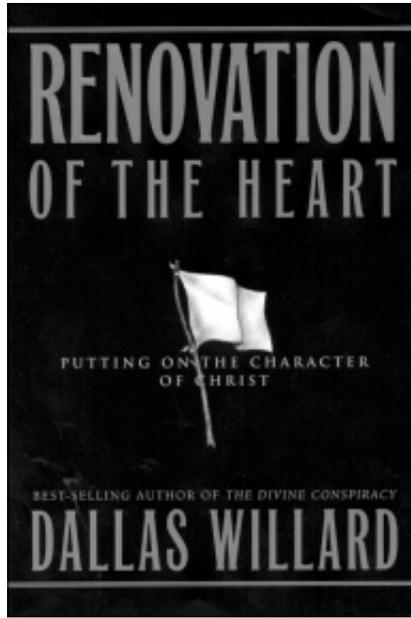
Meanwhile, I am becoming more and more aware that for me writing is a very powerful way of concentrating and of clarifying for myself many thoughts and feelings. Once I put pen on paper and write for an hour or two, a real sense of peace and harmony comes to me. . . . After a day without any writing . . . I often have a general feeling of mental constipation and go to bed with the sense that I did not do what I should have done that day.

Here we have examples of the power of journal writing in two very different contexts . . . One a woman, one a man. One a young homemaker, one an experienced and prominent spiritual leader and writer. . . . As you read this book and put its ideas into action, realise that you fit somewhere between these two.

SPECIAL OFFER (FREE SHIPPING TO THE U.S. AND CANADA)

How often have we wished for a transformed life; a life in which we are at peace with God, with ourselves, with our family, with our neighbors, and with the world around us? And how many times have we wondered how to turn our wishes into reality?

In *Renovation of the Heart* released in May, Dallas Willard tells us how we can truly go beyond wishing for a transformed life to its reality. He bases his discussion of our human nature on Jesus' words in Luke 10:26—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your



mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (PAR). Dallas explains in detail how the four components of the human personality—heart, soul, body, and mind—operate, and how they can be renewed by taking on the character of Christ.

The ideal end of the divine transformation is when "all of the essential parts of the human self are organized around God, as they are restored and sustained by him. Spiritual transformation in Christ is the process leading to that ideal end."

For the reality of a transformed life, read *Renovation of the Heart* and work its truths deep into your heart.

Contents

PRELUDE

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING SPIRITUAL FORMATION: *The "Beyond Within" and The Way of Jesus*

CHAPTER 2: THE HEART IN THE SYSTEM OF HUMAN LIFE

CHAPTER 3: RADICAL EVIL IN THE RUINED SOUL

CHAPTER 4: RADICAL GOODNESS RESTORED TO THE SOUL

CHAPTER 5: SPIRITUAL CHANGE: THE RELIABLE PATTERN

INTERLUDE

CHAPTER 6: TRANSFORMING THE MIND, 1: *Spiritual Formation and the Thought Life*

CHAPTER 7: TRANSFORMING THE MIND, 2: *Spiritual Formation and Our Feelings*

CHAPTER 8: TRANSFORMING THE WILL (HEART OR SPIRIT) AND CHARACTER

CHAPTER 9: TRANSFORMING THE BODY

CHAPTER 10: TRANSFORMING OUR SOCIAL DIMENSION

CHAPTER 11: TRANSFORMING THE SOUL

CHAPTER 12: THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER 13: SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

POSTLUDE



ORDER FORM

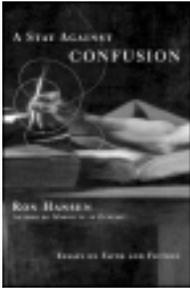
Name or Company		Attention	Street Address	
City		State	Zip	Telephone ()
Quantity	Item	Sugg. Donation Each		Total
	<i>Renovation of the Heart</i> , Dallas Willard (free shipping to U.S. & Canada)	\$25.00		
	International shipping (quantity X \$9.00)	\$ 9.00		
TOTAL				

Make checks out to RENOVARE (U.S. Funds on a U.S. bank only, please) and mail to RENOVARE, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5624 USA or fax to 303-792-0146. Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. If living outside the U.S.A., see international shipping above.

Credit Card: (circle one) AMEX Discover MasterCard Visa
 Credit Card # _____ Expr. Date _____
 Signature _____

GOING DEEPER

With the emphasis in this issue of the *Perspective* on the connection between the arts and Christianity, we thought it would be appropriate to offer items that concentrate on the creative aspect of The Incarnational Life. We hope you find the following selections helpful.

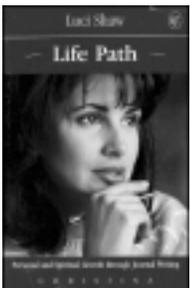


***A Stay Against Confusion*, Ron Hansen**

A series of reflections on faith and fiction from a well-known contemporary novelist, author of the novels *Mariette in Ecstasy* and *Atticus*. Hansen, a Catholic, says that writing “can be viewed as a sacrament insofar as it provides graced occasions of encounter between humanity and God.” He describes the importance of the Bible in his personal formation, and alludes to the influence of John Gardner upon his work.

***An Evening with Madamo*, Marti Ensign**

While the dominant culture relies on image and humor to get our attention, the well-told, heartfelt story continues to be a source of strength and encouragement. Within this tradition, RENOVARE has produced *An Evening With Madamo: Stories and Reflections on Our Life with God*, featuring RENOVARE Team Member Marti Ensign (with Richard J. Foster). During her twenty-five years as a missionary in Africa, Marti immersed herself in the oral tradition and here reflects on that time and other experiences. The twelve selections are bits of grace and peace, stories that move the soul each time we hear them and create in us the desire for the life God offers.

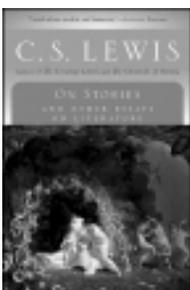
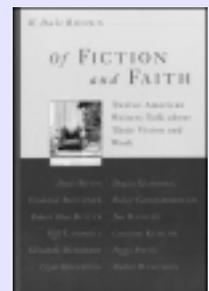


***Life Path: Personal and Spiritual Growth Through Journal Writing*, Luci Shaw**

An informal and very helpful instruction on the keeping of a spiritual journal, whether on retreat or in the midst of a hectic daily schedule. All of Luci’s advice is just as practical as this: “You may have received the impression that the only kind of journal worth keeping is the kind of solemn entry that deals with spirituality or deep personal crisis. No. The true journal is a *commentary on all of life*, and often it is the casual comment, the trivial event that is shown to be significant as you reread it later.”

***Of Fiction and Faith: Twelve American Writers Talk About Their Vision and Their Work*, W. Dale Brown**

The interviewer, Dale Brown, helps us to understand how faith influences certain contemporary fiction writers. He describes these individuals as “writers who will surprise and dismay; they may disturb and puzzle; but they finally offer insight into the lives we live.” Among those included in this series of interviews are: Doris Betts, Frederick Buechner, Robert Olen Butler, Elizabeth Dewberry, Garrison Keillor, and Walter Wangerin. One of the themes Brown explores is why these writers of faith may not always have experienced the success that comes to others; and why they persist in what they are writing, all the same.

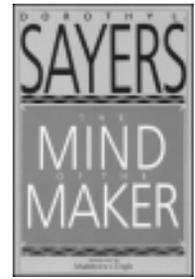


***On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*, C. S. Lewis**

Both creative writer and critic, this notable man of faith helps us to understand stories. One of the essays included is an enthusiastic commentary on Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. “It All Began with a Picture” is a brief account of how Lewis came to write *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. This very short essay also shows how the creative process takes the writer in unexpected directions.

The Mind of the Maker, Dorothy Sayers

This is a short philosophical work by the gifted English Christian writer who tried every literary form from biblical playwriting to murder mystery. She compares God's work of creation to that of the creative artist. Heavy going for some, but it may be your cup of tea!

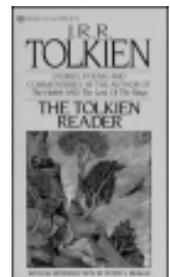


The Return of the Prodigal Son, Henri J. M. Nouwen

Henri Nouwen, a much loved spiritual writer, experiences the story of the Prodigal Son again through Rembrandt's painting. He links his own story to Jesus' parable and shows us how to do the same. The book is illustrated with a reproduction of the Rembrandt painting and details of the painting.

The Tolkien Reader, J. R. R. Tolkien

The focus of this offer is "On Fairy-stories," a remarkable essay from the author of *The Lord of the Rings*. Bear in mind that this essay was originally given as the Andrew Lang Lecture at the University of St. Andrews for an audience of literary critics. But the joy is, Tolkien has packed all his literary theories and his understanding of the realm of Faerie into this essay. Most interesting of all, is that Tolkien suggests how fairy-tale endings may intersect with Christian truth.



ORDER FORM

Name or Company		Attention		Street Address	
City		State		Zip	Telephone ()
Quantity	Item	Sugg. Donation Each		Total	
	<i>A Stay Against Confusion</i> , Ron Hansen	\$ 14.00			
	<i>An Evening with Madame</i> , Marti Ensign	\$ 12.00			
	<i>Life Path: Personal and Spiritual Growth Through Journal Writing</i> , Luci Shaw	\$ 9.00			
	<i>Of Fiction and Faith</i> , W. Dale Brown	\$ 20.00			
	<i>On Stories and Other Essays on Literature</i> , C. S. Lewis	\$ 12.00			
	<i>The Mind of the Maker</i> , Dorothy Sayers	\$ 13.00			
	<i>The Return of the Prodigal Son</i> , Henri J. M. Nouwen.	\$ 16.00			
	<i>The Tolkien Reader: Stories, Poems, and Commentaries</i> , J. R. R. Tolkien	\$ 7.00			
Shipping & Handling		\$ 1.00-\$ 20.00 = \$ 6.00	\$ 50.01-\$ 100.00 = \$ 8.00	Shipping & Handling	
(based on value of books)		\$ 20.01-\$ 50.00 = \$ 7.00	\$ 100.01+ = \$ 9.00	TOTAL	

Make checks out to RENOVARE (U.S. Funds on a U.S. bank only, please) and mail to RENOVARE, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5624 USA or fax to **303-792-0146**. Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. If living outside the U.S.A., please send additional monies for shipping.

Credit Card: (circle one) AMEX Discover MasterCard Visa

Credit Card # _____ Expr. Date _____

Signature _____

GOING PLACES WITH RENOVARÉ

Date	Event	Location	Staff	Contact & Information
4-5 Oct. 2002	Columbus, OH Regional Conference	Meadow Park Church 2425 Bethel Road Columbus, Ohio	Richard Foster George Skramstad Siang-Yang Tan	Craig Yoder 614-365-2231 cyoder@crowechizek.com
21-23 Oct. 2002 <i>This conference is primarily for people who speak Korean.</i>	Los Angeles, CA Pastor's and Leader's Conference	The Oriental Mission Church 424 Northwestern Avenue Los Angeles, California	Richard Foster Brian Kang	Brian Kang 909-860-5584 bkangms@yahoo.com
8-9 Nov. 2002	Atlanta, GA Regional Conference	Northbrook United Methodist Ch. 11225 Crabapple Road Roswell, Georgia	Glandion Carney Richard Foster George Skramstad	Julie Turner 770-992-6011 julieturner@mindspring.com
9 Nov. 2002	McPherson, KS Local Conference	McPherson College 1600 East Euclid Street McPherson, Kansas	James Bryan Smith	Keith Funk 785-754-3630 kfunk1956@hotmail.com
31 Jan.-1 Feb. 2003	Jacksonville FL Regional Conference	Deermeadows Baptist Church 9780 Baymeadows Road Jacksonville, Florida	Richard Foster George Skramstad 3rd Team Member TBA	Michael Riley 904-642-2200
21-22 Feb. 2003	Rolling Hills Estates, CA Regional Conference	Rolling Hills Covenant Church 2222 Palos Verdes Drive North Rolling Hills Estates, California	Richard Foster George Skramstad Dallas Willard	Carol Houston Gibbs 310-521-2518 cgibbs@rhcc.net
7-8 March 2003	Paoli, PA Regional Conference	Good Samaritan Episcopal Church 212 West Lancaster Avenue Paoli, Pennsylvania	Richard Foster George Skramstad James Bryan Smith	Dave Tower 610-725-0656 dhtower@bellatlantic.net
21-22 March 2003	Boise, ID Regional Conference	Site TBA	Margaret Campbell Richard Foster George Skramstad	Randy Rains 208-283-7068 ranrains@cablone.net
28-29 March 2003	Scranton, PA Regional Conference	Ladore Conference Center 380 South Street Waymart, Pennsylvania	Glandion Carney James Bryan Smith	Mickey Mosher 570-488-6129 mmosher@use.salvationarmy.org
2-3 May 2003	Northern VA Regional Conference	Site TBA	Richard Foster George Skramstad Dallas Willard	Phil Anderson 703-914-5602, Ext 3105 phil@cslewisinstitute.org

For more information or to help organize a conference, call or e-mail the contact person.

8 INVERNESS DRIVE EAST, SUITE 102
ENGLEWOOD, CO 80112-5624 USA

Return Service Requested

 **RENOVARÉ**, Inc.

NON-PROFIT ORG U.S. POSTAGE PAID WICHITA, KS PERMIT NO. 1148
