



## from the director's desk

BY PAIGE CUNNINGHAM, JD

Executive Director

Hello! In my debut column as Executive Director of CBHD, I first want to say “thank you.” Thank you for taking the time to read Dignitas, to visit [cbhd.org](http://cbhd.org), to attend conferences and seminars, to care enough about bioethics to engage more deeply and thoughtfully.

I’m going to let you in on what I shared with the staff at our first staff meeting: my vision for CBHD. The vision is not a radical shift, but an extension of what is already working. Nearly twenty years ago, a small cadre of people alert to what was happening in the academy and its corrosive effect on culture decided to do something about it. As John Kilner, the first director, described it, they knew we needed a vehicle for Christian bioethics, a “Kingdom project.” CBHD was born.

Since that fateful decision, CBHD has tackled serious bioethical issues through conferences, education, printed materials, and networking with Christian bioethics centers and individuals (including doctors, scholars, and key influencers). We initiated several book series, launched several websites, and supported the MA Bioethics offered by Trinity Graduate School. More recently, CBHD has expanded our network to include Christian bioethicists from around the world, including two scholars from India and Australia who studied in residence in July 2009.

Now, for the vision for the future. CBHD will focus intentionally on giving meaning to every part of our name. What could that look like?

The: CBHD must continue to have credibility with our audience, with the media, with inquirers about Judeo-Christian perspectives in bioethics. We want to be “experts of first resort.” As one of the very first evangelical organizations committed to Judeo-Christian Hippocratic values, we hold an historic role in the field of bioethics.

Center: We are a center of gravity for evangelical thought work. Through expansion of current programs, as well as new initiatives, CBHD will be the locus of critical, innovative research seeking to engage the broad culture and the academy through our “scholarship with a purpose.”

for: Our mission is not about digging foxholes, but moving forward. Our concerns about the negative trends and anticipation of life-affirming developments in bioethics and culture are founded on a positive, confident understanding of the disguised magnificence of every human being.

Bioethics: Although the meaning of “human dignity” is discussed in many arenas, CBHD will focus on research in emerging bioethical issues. Our task begins at the level of scholarly analysis, followed by the work of “translation” of academic work into a common vocabulary, clarifying its implications and practical applications, and multiplying its impact via communication media to larger audiences. We will continue our work with clinical ethics, and expand our resources that are particularly appropriate for pastors and church educators.

&: CBHD could never be “B” or “HD.” Bioethics, apart from grounding in a proper understanding of human dignity, drifts toward culturally determined pragmatism.

Human: Our responsibility to the bioethics community is a watchman’s role. Like the fearless youth in the crow’s nest, CBHD scans the distant horizon, scouting danger not perceived by the crew on the deck below. The threat we most fear: assaults on our common humanity. The welcome signs we peer to see: new technologies that affirm the life and health of all human beings.

Dignity: We can no longer hide from the requirements of treating each person with respect and dignity. The cost must be counted, for it is the cost of living counterculturally. Lip service is a dry well. We have the living water—inexhaustible, refreshing, seed-watering, life-giving water.

I think of our spheres of activity as “communities of influence.” These connect like-minded people, whether their interest is scholarly research, clinical ethics, public policy, or church leadership. These are places for charitable critique of scholarship, reliable discussions of bioethical dilemmas, spiritual camaraderie, and face-to-face conversations. As “iron sharpens iron,” we stretch for excellence as we engage and encourage each other.

How will this happen? Only through you. You, and the other stakeholders who are committed to CBHD’s vision, have confidence in our people, and are committed to resourcing the mission. I hope that I can count on you, your prayer, and as you are able, your financial support. We’re all in this together!

*Paige Constance Cunningham*

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