

# A STRATEGIC ADDITION TO THE CENTER'S TEAM

BY COURTNEY BEASLEY, INTERN '09



## The Announcement

After an exhaustive search, Paige Comstock Cunningham, J.D. (MA Bioethics '04) has been appointed as executive director of The Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity. "Ms. Cunningham's expertise and more than twenty years' experience as an attorney, educator, church member, public servant, and leader in human dignity and bioethical issues will serve TIU well," noted Trinity President Craig Williford. "Her passion for the church and the scholarly world will provide an excellent platform for leading our center."

Having served in various roles at Americans United for Life, including president and chairman of the board of directors, Paige Cunningham has a passion for engaging the culture. She has already invested in the next generation of leaders as an adjunct faculty member at Wheaton College, Trinity Law School, and Trinity Graduate School. Interim Dean of Trinity Graduate School Joyce Shelton appreciates Paige's academic and professional background: "As a seasoned teacher in the MA Bioethics program, she brings strong commitment to education, enhanced by her experience with engaging critical bioethical issues in the public arena."

Paige envisions a strong future for CBHD: "The work of CBHD as a 'thought center' is more relevant than ever. CBHD is a resource for decision-makers that is strategically focused on research and scholarship in bioethical issues. We have an obligation to pursue truth as it pertains to respecting the dignity of each human life."

"CBHD has an enviable track record in anticipating cutting edge moral questions in science, medicine and technology. I am committed to continuing this much-needed area of inquiry. CBHD will pursue 'scholarship with a purpose.' By this I mean the essential combination of empirical research, ethical and theological reflection, and practical application for the bioethical questions we encounter at the bedside and in everyday life. This will benefit individuals, churches in the evangelical tradition, and the broader bioethical conversation."

## Additional Reflections on Paige's Appointment

The Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity (CBHD) is pleased to welcome its new executive director, Paige Comstock Cunningham, JD.

Paige has been affiliated with the Center since 1995 when Nigel Cameron, CBHD co-founder and Advisory Board chair, invited Paige to join the Advisory Board. At the time, Paige was President of Americans United for Life (AUL), a public interest law and education organization. Her most recent role with CBHD is as a Senior Fellow, which she'll relinquish when she steps into the Executive Director's slot. Additionally, she has served as an adjunct faculty member on Trinity International University's

(CBHD's parent organization) Deerfield campus for the MA Bioethics degree and with Trinity Law School in Santa Ana, California. Cunningham comes to the Center with a passion to raise the level of scholarship and empirical research in bioethics and biotechnology.

"We need top-level thinking on issues such as the selling of human eggs, cosmetic enhancements, and life extension technologies," said Paige. She added that "we must translate the serious thought work into usable guidance for people who are actually making decisions on these tough subjects." She believes that CBHD has a mission to serve both the evangelical community and the broader bioethical conversation.

Cunningham's educational and experiential background in law, public policy and bioethics give her a solid foundation from which to work. She developed a desire for juvenile justice while completing a high school project on child abuse. She pursued this passion by attending law school, and in 1982 she completed her Juris Doctor (JD) at Northwestern University School of Law. Since receiving her JD, she has given legal testimony on the subjects of abortion and protection for the viable fetus. Although not pro-life when she started law school, Cunningham dug into the issue when she was asked to join a local chapter of Christian Action Council (the predecessor of CareNet).

"The evidence was clear," said Paige who saw abortion as a matter of basic civil rights. "An entire class of human beings—the unborn—had been written out of the Constitution."

Since then, Cunningham completed her MA in Bioethics from Trinity in 2004. She has had numerous appearances on radio and television broadcasts, and has been quoted in national print media. Cunningham has contributed book chapters and many articles on the topics of law, public policy and bioethics. Assisted reproduction and beginning of life concerns are her particular interest, but she also admits to delving into the topics of gene patenting, genetic privacy, and the ethics of enhancement.

Cunningham believes that the rapid development of technologies confronts us with serious ethical challenges.

"Most of these technologies will raise hard issues that most people do not want to touch, and it might mean uncomfortable personal decisions."

Cunningham feels that ultimately the debate must settle who counts as a member of the human family and decide what it means to flourish as a human being. Given her long-standing experience with bioethics and her familiarity with CBHD, she is ready to join the outstanding CBHD team.