

## CBHD Providing Leadership for Global Bioethics Initiative

The Lausanne Movement has invited The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity (CBHD), represented by Center President John Kilner, to serve as the facilitator of an ambitious global bioethics initiative. Leaders from all parts of the world are working together to consider how helping people engage bioethical challenges connects to the larger mission of the church.

Because bioethics has to do with how health care is provided and the uses to which emerging biotechnologies are put, bioethics has great significance for the physical dimension of human health and life. As such, it is a worthy concern of all who are committed to upholding the dignity of human beings created in God's image. It is part of the church's cultural mandate to encourage society to foster the kind of community in which all people truly flourish.

However, just as there is more to the church's mandate in the world than to engage the material needs of people, so there is a largely unexplored opportunity to connect the work of bioethics to a larger set of spiritual needs and questions.

After nearly a year of research, writing, and consultation via telephone and the Internet, the global group including Dr. Kilner, recently met in Bangkok, Thailand, to finalize the development of a 25,000-word strategy paper and to launch a new set of bioethics projects.

The strategy paper focuses on eight representative bioethical issues with particular personal and social importance:

- End-of-life treatment
- Just health care (access and allocation)
- Caregiver-patient relationship
- Abortion
- Reproductive technologies
- Stem cell research
- Human enhancement (genetic and cybernetic)
- Agricultural genetics

The paper has three objectives: to clarify key theological moorings of bioethics, to develop Christian positions on selected bioethical issues, and to identify the best strategies for helping people engage bioethical challenges in their lives and in the world in a way that connects with deeper spiritual needs. Following the consultation a new set of bioethics initiatives will be launched in order to implement many of these strategies.

Most people go through their entire lives without ever knowing the God who created them. They normally are not concerned about this, since they have most of what they need and feel more or less in control. That can change dramatically when their own bodies—or those of people close to them—begin to fail due to infertility, serious illness, or even impending death. People are confronted for the first time with the fact that they are not truly in control—that they are ultimately helpless in the universe.

A somewhat different situation arises today in the context of public debates about emerging biotechnologies. Many of these technologies have legitimate and wonderful uses, but if they are used wrongly the stakes are huge. Nothing less than a radical undermining of human dignity—if not the widespread destruction of human life itself—is at stake. Joining in these debates knowledgeably can create opportunities to engage people concerning such basic questions as what it means to be truly human, and the importance and source of human life and dignity.

The bioethics initiative is taking place together with, and in dialogue with, a number of parallel initiatives in other related topic areas, such as the initiative on disability issues. With all initiatives meeting together in Thailand, it was possible for the bioethics team to interact with other related teams, including the disability issues team led by Joni Eareckson Tada. See [www.lausanne.org](http://www.lausanne.org) for more information on the overall Lausanne Movement. It will be exciting to see all that flows from this global process. ■