

Continuing the Vital Mission

BY DAVID R. LINCOLN

We enter the 83rd year of the Catholic Health Association mindful that the healing mission of Jesus is our inspiration. Because Jack Curley has announced his intention to retire after serving as president for 19 years, we take time to celebrate a leader who has placed the continuation of this vital healing mission at the cornerstone of CHA's actions. The association Jack leaves is much changed, reflecting dramatic changes in the ministry. Jack's leadership has enabled CHA to position itself to be a strong voice for the Catholic health ministry. The *New Covenant* process, the refounded mission and vision, and the new strategic planning process are all hallmarks of this vibrant association.

CHA has had seven chief executive officers during its history. This latest transition is clearly a major moment for the association, one it can use to build upon its strong foundation. It is for this reason that its Board of Trustees chose a formal and inclusive search process. This is an opportunity to reach out to members and other key stakeholders in making a selection that will profoundly affect the future of the association. Both the board and its new search committee are committed to broad-based involvement and communication during the search process. We welcome your participation, either formally or informally.

CHA will go forward with its agenda of important strategic initiatives during this year of transition. At the 82nd Catholic Health Assembly in June, we shared the results of this year's planning process with the membership. That Strategic Plan (see pp. 67-78) is the basis for multiple activities which the association will implement during the coming year. CHA has recommitted itself to advancing the Catholic health ministry by being a catalyst for all involved in the ministry through:

- Research and development
- Education and facilitation
- Advocacy

The Strategic Plan clearly articulates the important initiatives. Among these are the dissemination



*Mr. Lincoln,
president and chief
executive officer of
Covenant Health
Systems, Inc.,
Lexington, MA,
is chairperson of
the Catholic Health
Association's Board
of Trustees for
1997-98.*

of case studies and best practices in areas of values-based physician linkages, new sponsorship relationships, supportive care of the dying, and partnerships with other-than-Catholic organizations.

CHA is also embarking on ways of engaging with a broadened membership. These include educational offerings, committee participation, advocacy input, and grassroots legislative action initiatives. In addition, CHA has entered into partnership with groups such as Supportive Care of the Dying: A Coalition for Compassionate Care and Partners for Catholic Health Ministry Leadership Development. CHA has also committed itself to strengthening its efforts to support other-than-acute-care providers and to reach out to other affinity groups, including Catholic Charities USA. These initiatives reflect the changes taking place within the membership.

In addition, the board last year commissioned a Membership/Dues Task Force. This important group will continue the work of evaluating the appropriate membership criteria to reflect both the many organizational changes taking place in the ministry and the new base of potential members. The task force will present its findings and recommendations on membership criteria and associated dues structures in time for the 83rd annual assembly. Members' involvement is critical.

CHA's board is committed to continuing the exciting developments initiated over the past several years. We thank Jack for his leadership and for remaining involved during this transition. We also thank the staff and membership for continuing CHA's vital work this year. We will keep you up to date with the work of the search committee, the Membership/Dues Task Force, and other important actions. □

