

UNITE!

Amicus and T&G members have merged to create Britain and Ireland's newest and biggest trade union with around two million members. In the ballot to approve the creation of Unite the Union, the T&G gave the go-ahead by 86.4% for merger and Amicus members voted 70.1% for merger.

VISION

Unite is now the union at the forefront of supporting workers in struggle nationally and internationally, through its programme of campaigning and organising. Unite will truly be a 'Union for Life' as it cuts across all sectors of the economy and should be everyone's choice from leaving school, through apprenticeships, training, or higher education. The Union will have a range of programmes offering advice, support and information specially tailored for young people just starting out at work, whether part-time whilst studying, or at their first job, right through to those at the end of their working lives, and beyond.

Throughout members' working lives – whatever their job and whoever their employer – Unite will always be available to support its members, providing representation, advice, and information, together with a range of additional benefits tailored to the needs of members and their families.

DEMOCRACY

Unite has resolved that:

- its executive must be solely a lay member body
- its new structures should facilitate inclusion, not act as a barrier to members' participation
- equalities must be central
- members should have industrial autonomy on their wages and conditions

Unite brings together Faith Workers from Amicus and the T&G, making this an even stronger union for those working as Minsiters of Religion or for a faith body or charity. For Unite to become the most powerful union on campaigning for the issues that effect its members, it needs to organise and grow. If you know someone that hasn't yet joined the Unite – ask them to join. It isn't fair to let them be left out.

JOIN ON LINE AT www.unitetheunion.org

GREENBELT 2007

Unite the Union, in its bid to appeal to a broad section of the faith community is visiting Greenbelt. We have a stand throughout the week, and would like members to come and enjoy the festival as well as take responsibility for the stand and other activities that the union is engaged with.

Date: 24th – 27th August 2007

If you would like to volunteer to help Unite contact: Maureen.German@amicustheunion.org 0207 420 8978

All members are welcome to help, and we have some complimentary tickets to those that come first.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHANGE

Branch Chair, Gerry Barlow, describes our hopes for partnership with faith bodies to prevent unnecessary loss of personnel and the development of a well resourced body of faith workers.

It is a sad fact that as soon as there is mention of a union amongst people in ministry people will resort to the stereotypes to justify an array of objections. Despite the positive approach that Unite Faith Workers is bringing to the resolution of disputes involving ministers and broader discussions about people management in the faith bodies, the belief that ministry is a covenant relationship with which secular law or practices should not interfere remains very prevalent. Experience has demonstrated however, that whilst there is truth in the value of pastoral relationships, it is dangerous to believe that on this basis little can go wrong.

Protection and partnership

Recent public events make it clear to even the most cynical that this approach simply does not provide the protection that is needed, nor does it deliver the desired outcomes. We have read high profile cases about ministers' abuse of children and the tragic mismanagement of such cases in the past, resulting in the effective protection of perpetrators, whilst the abused went unprotected. Or the murder of a minister, killed through an assault on his property. And so we discover evidence of a neglect of the duty of care, serious errors in personal judgement; evidence that all is not well under the current system. It is the responsibility of us all to ensure that these situations never occur again and it is therefore essential that the faith institutions work with a wider number of partners, including the unions, to address these challenges. Faith institutions should never put themselves above the law, and they should be humble enough to draw on the expertise of others.

Unite is often involved in issues that bring ministers to near breaking point, with resultant stress and destruction of confidence and of ministry. The special relationship between a minister and the people under his or her care leads to 24/7

working, a poor work-life balance. This 'special relationship' cannot be used as a diversion from seeking just restitution and good 'employment' conditions.

Why this happens

Why should there be this attitude? It is always when relationships break down and people have to leave their places of work, and this is exacerbated in places of worship when the worker has clearly felt some sort of call to be there. No matter what the reasons for each case, this should be a huge concern to us all. People in whom an organisation has invested considerable resources are being lost. To squander what we are constantly told are scarce resources is bad economics: in organisations which face recruitment shortages this is a serious loss to the cause. So why is it that their leaving apparently happens so easily?

There are several things we need to grasp and consider here.

1. Some faith bodies are financially challenged. They simply do not have enough funds to pay their leaders. The resulting "restructuring", representing retrenchment and reduction, means ministerial reductions are viewed as cost saving measures.
2. Often we note a mismatch between what the leader believes they should be about, and what the actual group they are supposed to lead now say they want. In any normal employment situation this would be governed by a contract setting out expectations and duties in detail. It is the nature of the office holder relationship which politicises these situations and leads to inequalities in power. Inequalities in expectation beyond the 'honeymoon period' are exacerbated by the lack of mechanisms to address issues, resulting relational breakdown and issues being addressed too late in the day.

3. Continual in service training is helpful and religious bodies are working hard to develop this. However, it is often far too little and far too late. To be effective, training needs to be welcomed and agreed. Good adult education builds on confidence and current skills. Effective training needs to be tailored both to the needs of the individual and the organisation: it requires partnership not coercion.
4. Then there is the issue of the management skills of those with leadership responsibilities. Examples of military style management with an expectation of unquestioned obedience are one model that comes our way. Another is no leadership at all until things begin to go wrong, resulting simply in confusion. Proper leadership training of the highest order is not desirable, it is essential. Excellence in leadership is what is required.

As a Branch we are addressing these key areas.

The value of training

We offer, and encourage our members to engage in lifelong training, in whatever way we they can. We also meet with the top leadership of the faith organisations to encourage best practice and discuss the issues we come across so they can be constructively dealt with. In addition we are encouraging faith bodies to recommend that their members join the union so they will have help in times of need from a body that is not attached to the organisation itself and so has no bias or partisan role to play, but demonstrates excellence in its field.

These actions are getting results and are part of our ongoing efforts to secure ever better conditions for our members.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Unite member, Tony Bell, writes:

You will be aware of the death of another clergyman, Paul Bennett, as a result of a stabbing. You may not be aware that clergy are the most assaulted profession with the possible exception of police.

Several years ago, when I was chairing the Amicus Faith Workers Branch, I persuaded Brian Leathers, then a member of Amicus and a General Synod representative of Derby Diocese, to place a private members motion before the General Synod. It read as follows:

This Synod request the Archbishops' Council to establish a working party to

- (a) consider the issue of Health and Safety within the Church, especially from the point of view of staff in the performance of their duties (whether on or off site) and of visitors to its buildings;
- (b) identify those responsible for complying with Health and Safety obligations within the Church and make proposals to enable them more effectively to discharge those obligations, including by recommending structures, practices, procedures and (if appropriate) changes to Church legislation; and
- (c) report to this Synod within two years.

Sadly the motion did not attract enough signatures to take it any further and since then I have been frustrated by Derby Diocese in taking the same motion through the synodical process as a parish motion which passed Deanery Synod overwhelmingly two and a half years ago.

I have written to my MP, Dennis Skinner, who has passed on my concerns to Stuart Bell, the Church Commissioners' Commons spokesman, to ask what is likely to happen over Health and Safety. Sir Stuart has yet to reply.

So, after the recent tragedy, I wrote the following letter to The Church Times.

In the aftermath of the tragic death of Fr. Paul Bennett, one of several clergy murders in recent years, I fully expect the establishment expression of concern and assurance. I must still point out, however, that the previous General Synod did not take up the private member's bill to commission a report on Health and Safety, and that Derby Diocese is currently delaying, after watering down (over two years so far) the same motion as a parish motion that has passed its Deanery Synod stage.

Derby Diocese has been stung (I saw the hurt response to our Deanery Synod Secretary) into putting the original motion on the agenda for May 5th. Let us see if there is now a will to get Health and Safety as comprehensively organised in the church as child protection. If the church is serious about getting a credible Employment Rights package enabled, then that has to include a credible Health and Safety package as well. Watch this space.



The Pensions Predicament

Last February the Church of England General Synod voted in favour of cutting the value of clergy pensions. This is a far-reaching decision with possible consequences beyond the immediate changes which gained approval. What is being proposed is a raid on the pension fund to pay for the current costs of running the Church. The Church Commissioners will be able to remove capital from pre-1998 pension liabilities to pay for "mission".

What are the current pension rules?

- Each year of service counts for one 37th of a pension
- A full pension is two-thirds of the National Minimum Stipend (NMS)
- A lump sum of three times the current annual pension is paid on retirement.
- The current pension after 37 years is £12,040
- After retirement the pension increases each year. The current rules state that this will be in line with the Retail Price Index but capped if RPI goes above 5%. The rules also give discretion to give higher increases. Until February it had been the Church's stated objective that the increase should match the increase in the NMS.

The new rules

(as set out in GS 1645

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/agendas/feb2007.html>)

- From January 2008 each year served will count for one 40th of a pension
- The pension paid on retirement will still be two-thirds of the NMS, in proportion to the number of years worked
- The lump sum payable on retirement remains at three times the earned pension
- Post retirement increases will no longer match rises in the NMS, but will rise in line with RPI but capped if inflation should rise above 3.5%. This is the most damaging change and a direct reversal of previous policy. It also fails to recognise RPI as a measure of national general inflation, not a measure of inflation affecting clergy pensioners who on retirement are taking on housing costs.

Who will this affect?

- All clergy, whether retired or on stipend.
- Years worked up to the end of 2007 will still earn one 37th of the pension, but future years of service will only earn one 40th. Someone ordained in 1988 and due to retire in 2018 will receive 20/37 plus 10/40 which is 0.79 of the full pension, under present rules a 30 year ministry would result in 0.81 of the full pension. The new rules will reduce the lump sum payable at retirement in the same way.
- Annual increases in retirement will be less. If the proposed rules had been in place 10 years ago, a person who retired 10 years ago would now be receiving over 10% less than under the existing rules. In the meantime the maximum contribution of retired clergy to their housing costs has increased from 25% of pension from all sources, to 30% since 2003. This is a cost-cutting exercise.
- The Church will be able to reduce future contributions to the pension fund (for pensions earned after 1997) thus reducing the costs of clergy to parishes.
- The Church Commissioners (responsible for pensions earned up to the end of 1997) will save £180 m. By breaking the link with the NMS for post-retirement pension increases the Church Commissioners' liabilities are hugely reduced. They will be able to take £180 m. away from pension liabilities, **this remember is pensions already earned by clergy as deferred stipend**, and use it for other purposes.

What happens next?

New legislation to make this happen will come before General Synod in July 2007. Pensions Board scheme members are currently being consulted for their views, the Pensions Board has already had to re-issue one of its original tables because it contained mis-information, these need to be in by May 31. The latest triennial actuarial review is not yet available and yet this decision is being rushed through between February and July of this year – the biggest change in clergy pension arrangements for decades. It can only be stopped by massive pressure from the members of the scheme on General Synod members before July, retired members are not even represented in Synod.

Why these damaging changes?

- Pressure from the Pensions Regulator on the Church to put in sufficient money to fund pension commitments and remove the current deficit
- Lack of available funds from the Church Commissioners to help in this situation
- To enable money to be released for the current work of the Church
- Increased clergy longevity
- Affordability by parishes and dioceses.



in the Church of England

What should be our responses?

- Pre-1998 pensions are only one call on the funds of the Church Commissioners and yet these reductions in pension have been put forward without looking for other possible cuts in the spending of the Commissioners.
- The 2nd Pensions Report to the Archbishops Council (June 2006) stated “reducing the pension liabilities of the Church Commissioners by a capital value of around £180 million would enable the Commissioners to increase their annual distributions for non-pension purposes by about £4.4 million”, this would be annualised. It could not be clearer that a major purpose of this decision is to take money which had been allocated for pensions and use it for the current and future work of the Church. It ignores the fact that retired clergy are part of the mission of the church, and that commitments made in the past are now being abandoned. The report which went to February Synod included a recommendation that more people be attracted into the ordained ministry. If we evidently cannot afford the ones we already have then it has to be assumed that the proposed cuts to pensions are to fund these extra clergy.
- Many retired clergy struggle to make ends meet on the current level of pension, a full pension may be in the top 20% of pensions in the country but the number retiring on a full pension is diminishing

and not many of the other people entering into retirement are taking on housing costs as clergy are.

- The report to the February Synod acknowledged the evidence that clergy pensioners are affected by higher rates of consumer price inflation than the general population – but then dismissed this in one short paragraph. As people age they become more dependent on employing others both for care and DIY, it should be made possible for clergy pensioners to do this from pension rather than suggest they resort to clergy charities to enable them to have a decent level of existence.
- It is an attractive proposal to release money for mission, but should the retired clergy be paying for that mission rather than the whole Church?

If this goes through what might happen next?

- Decoupling pension increases from NMS will allow for future increases in stipend to enable the implementation at a later date of a contributory, or money-purchase pension scheme for clergy
- It will also enable stipend increases to encourage serving clergy to enter the property market earlier in ministry to provide for their retirement housing, thus lessening pressure on Charm. These two things cannot happen whilst the present rules are in place without the increased costs also feeding through into pensions.

Unite strongly believes that the current proposals renege on commitments made to clergy in the recent past and that both this and the use of deferred stipend (future pensions) for other areas of the Church's work are immoral.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

- Respond to the consultation using information above.
- E-mail Shaun Farrell (pensions@cepb.c-of-e.org.uk), secretary of the Pensions Board, with your views, ask also why it was not possible to wait for the triennial actuarial review result.
- Lobby your General Synod members in person and in writing before the vote in July.
- Raise the issue in deanery chapters and synods and encourage lay-people also to respond.
- Write to the Church press.
- Use the opportunity to recruit new members to Unite the Union to enable a stronger dialogue between the union and the Church of England.

The Zimbabwe Christian Alliance

Amicus Faith Workers were honoured in April by a visit from colleagues who lead the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance, as they sought to share their experience of the harsh conditions faced by Zimbabweans on a daily basis.

As Pastor Useni Sibanda and his colleague, Pastor Promise Manceda, brought Branch members up to speed with the political and economic situation within Zimbabwe, they also highlighted the hopes of those who remain in Zimbabwe for bringing about change. The Zimbabwe Christian Alliance draws together 500 Christian leaders from all denominations who stand united in prayer, in supporting those that are suffering at this time and in their ambition to bring about change in Zimbabwe.

The ZCA also links in with organisations like the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions, whom as a Branch we have been supporting, encouraging our brothers and sisters as they stand up for justice. With the 2006 Faith Workers Conference being addressed by Thabitha Khumalo, Vice President of the ZCTU, and our new contacts with the ZCA, Amicus aspires to support a campaign to see justice restored to this nation.

As a Branch, we will be looking to work with others in organising a day of prayer for Zimbabwe, as well as looking for opportunities to work with other unions at home and abroad to campaign that the next G8 summit will address the crisis in Zimbabwe.

We will be keeping you informed of further developments.



From left: Pastor Promise Manceda, Pastor Useni Sibanda, calling all to take a stand to "Save Zimbabwe"

UNITE THE UNION FOR FAITH WORKERS
Helpline 0845 108 2575 faithworkers@amicustheunion.org

TWO LIVES

The Revd Martin Leigh

by Neil Bradley

The Revd Martin Leigh, Vicar of Cheddleton and Rural Dean of Leek, died last October, after a short illness. The Bishop of Lichfield, leading tributes, spoke of him as 'the popular clergyman' and spoke of his shock at news of his death. "Martin was a devoted parish priest and pastor, a scholar-priest with wide spiritual and intellectual interests. He spent time in a Christian ashram in India and his gifts were widely used in each of his dioceses. He was elected to lead the House of Clergy in Derbyshire for 15 years. Martin was also a member of the Labour Party as well as a member and representative of Amicus, he died at home on Sunday 29th October 2006, aged 65.

Father Hugh Bridge

by Gerry Barlow

The phone would ring late at night – an emergency or a wrong number I would think as I grappled with the phone – but no, it was Hugh Bridge with the latest update on one of the cases he was helping us with. Normal hours were not for Hugh and I think he expected others to feel likewise. He was a low key but really enthusiastic and dedicated man, always willing to help us in various cases involving Catholic priests or workers. His efforts on behalf of our members was very efficient and seemingly unbounded even though that necessitated his very long hours of activity. His great sense of justice was backed by a clear understanding of the way things worked and he always chose wise courses of action. His objectivity was seldom compromised by any other feelings he may have had.

Hugh had a far wider compass of interests than most could know of. Fluent in Russian, he was something of an expert on Russian literature and culture. He was not a person you got to know easily and could appear quite brusque at times. However this was more attributable to a certain loneliness and a concern for others rather than the niceties of social interaction. No doubt self neglect contributed to his untimely and early death. I was beginning to get to know him quite well as result of our dealings together, so his loss is quite a personal one to me, as well as a great loss to us as a Union. Hugh died on 27 Jan 2007 and will be sadly missed by all who did get to know the man within.

Have you ever investigated the educational opportunities which Amicus offers?

The Education and Training Department provides a range of services to workplace representatives and members.

Among the opportunities on offer are a range of nationally accredited short training courses on industrial relations, health & safety, and equality and diversity. The department can deliver sector specific training on request, provide a training needs analysis for developing workplace representatives' skills when representing members. There is also some helpful IT training available.

Contact the Education Department - Hayes Court, West Common Road, Hayes, Bromley BR2 7AU. Tel: 020 8462 7755, fax: 020 8315 8524, email: education@amicustheunion.org.



The human face of Unite the Union

Because of their work-situation, and sometimes the lack of clear lines of responsibility and accountability, faith workers can feel isolated when trouble strikes. That is when we really need someone to affirm us and stand by us. Unite seeks to provide that 'friend in need' in the form of the Local Area Representative (LAR).

While the position is unpaid (apart from expenses) it is a way in which you can provide crucial help and support to a fellow faith worker, and feel the satisfaction that flows from that.

Obviously this is a responsible position, but then faith workers are already used to that.

Full training is provided and there is support from regional and national officers as well. If you are concerned for your colleagues the why not become an LAR?

More details faithworkers@amicustheunion.org

The Executive of the Faith Workers Branch is

Chair	Gerry Barlow
Deputy Chair (office holders)	Malcolm Liles
Deputy Chair (lay members)	Neil Bradley
Helpline & website	Mike Bossingham
Admin team	Tom Ambrose and Roger Stokes
Communications	Gill Ambrose
Chaplain	Ray Owen
Member	Ian Tutton

Contact the Executive at faithworkers@amicustheunion.org or 0845 108 2575.
Faithworkers' Helpline: 0845 1082575 E mail: faithworkers@amicustheunion.org



**NOT A MEMBER? JOIN UNITE ONLINE AT
WWW.UNITETHEUNION.ORG.UK OR CALL
THE RECRUITMENT HOTLINE FREE 0800 587 1222**