

AMICUS – the Union

CLERGY AND CHURCH WORKERS NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2004

BRANCH NEWS

NEW NATIONAL HELPLINE NUMBER

There is a new national helpline number for all members of the Clergy and Church Workers Branch to use as their first point of contact, if they cannot reach their own Local Area Representative easily. It is

0845 108 2575

Keep this number handy, along with your membership number, which you will also require when contacting the Union.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Members at the last Annual General Meeting of the Clergy and Church Workers Section will remember a lengthy discussion on what we should be called. Hopefully not just “navel gazing”, the Section wants a name that will both accurately reflect its membership and be appealing when recruiting new members.

On the enclosed return slip about your e-mail number you will also find a space to respond about the proposed name change. There are four options. We can stay as we are; we can become “The Professional Association of Clergy and Church Workers” (this would be abbreviated to “PAX” – the 2 letter Cs being written back to back); another option is to be called “The Professional Association of Faith Workers” (PAFW); or “The Faith Workers’ Association” (FWA). There is also a space for alternative suggestions. Any proposed change will need the approval of Amicus’ National Executive Committee before it comes into effect.

The Branch is also trying to devise its own logo. If you have any ideas for this please send your sketch to the Editor preferably by e-mail (address at the end of this Newsletter).

AN IMPORTANT NOTICE REQUIRING YOUR ACTION

This is the last newsletter in this format, as the Clergy and Church Workers Section is joining the rest of the Union in moving over to electronic communication. The intention is that there will be an ANNUAL MAGAZINE in a glossy, colour format, but our regular Newsletter will be published on-line. For this reason it is most important that you complete the enclosed slip indicating either your e-mail address, or, if you do not presently have e-mail

capability, the request for a paper version to be sent to you.

We are intending to publish the first electronic version early in the New Year, so it is vital that you return this slip if you do not want to miss out on the latest Union News and Information.

GENERAL SYNOD – AN APPEAL

Sometimes the Union finds it most effective to work within the structures of a church organisation.

Presently there is a motion on the table of the Church of England’s General Synod concerning Health and Safety for clergy. It needs more signatures from GS members if it is to be discussed. Please ask *your* General Synod members to sign the motion so that it can be considered by Synod. If they have a reason not to sign it would be very helpful to know it.

EXECUTIVE VACANCIES

Our NEW CHAIRMAN writes:

I would first pay tribute to Bill Ward, as does the whole executive for his tireless work of the past few years. Stephen Trott has also been a great resource and we are sorry to lose him from the executive. There are now three vacancies on the executive since Robert Hearmon has also resigned because of a work move that puts him outside the remit of the branch. Please consider yourself for membership of the executive. At AGMs we tried to represent (not just by votes, but by balancing representation from geographical areas) minorities, disabled, denominations, and so on. The AGMs, however, constituted but 5% of the national membership of the branch. We hope this election will enable a wider participation in our democracy.

Tony Bell.

BY-ELECTION NOTICE

Thus there are 3 VACANCIES on the Branch Executive Committee. Although the people who have left had specific responsibilities, these have been re-allocated within the continuing executive so *no special skills are required!* Portfolios will be reconsidered when the composition of the new executive is known.

If you are interested in serving as a member of the Branch Executive please complete the nomination paper that came with this Newsletter and return it to Katie Moore at Amicus.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS FOR CLERGY – THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

*MEETING OF AMICUS FAITH REPS.
WITH THE DTI*

Organised and led by our new Sector National Officer, Rachael Maskell, members of the Clergy and Church Workers Branch attended a meeting at the Department of Trade and Industry on 19th May. The meeting was called by Gerry Sutcliffe, the minister responsible for employment matters and as well as our Union representatives there were also leaders or administrators from a number of faith groups including most Christian Churches, the Jewish community and Hinduism.

Each group was given a chance to give their argument for or against employed status for clergy. All the faith groups were opposed to accepting employed status. Their arguments were fairly consistent. In one way or another they sought to suggest that the relationship of minister and faith organisation is too complex and subtle to be treated as similar to that of an employee and employer. They described a remarkable variety of structures and processes. Despite a declared determination to do better in the future their attitudes seemed to me to be patronising and irresponsible. There was no real understanding of the heartbreak and pain they have inflicted on clergy and their families so often in the past. At no point did any of the faith leaders offer anything approaching a guarantee that they would be able to control or correct bad treatment of clergy by local congregation or national hierarchy though there was a clear attempt to bamboozle the minister and his officials into thinking that processes had or would be improved.

Amicus representatives, for their part, did not just argue for Section 23 employment rights, but also to be covered by Health and Safety legislation and Discrimination legislation.

As the meeting progressed it became clear the Minister was listening a great deal and saying nothing and we all formed the strong impression that inactivity is becoming the Government's preferred option. We have been asked to attend another meeting at the DTI in the future but have yet to hear how the Minister wants the discussion to proceed at this meeting.

If Minister Gerry Sutcliffe decides to do nothing it will be, in general terms, a betrayal of the commitment to Human Rights which this government is supposed to stand for. It will also be a further humiliation of those clergy who have

suffered at the hands of their faith organisations. We will have to use all the campaigning opportunities we can to make sure the government comes under pressure to give us the only protection that is worth anything – the protection of the law.

Christopher Elson

BILL WARD: A Tribute

The trade union movement was built on the principle of organising, and being organised is an understatement of how The Rev'd Bill Ward undertook his responsibilities in creating and building the Clergy and Church Workers branch for a decade. Bill ran the branch with such precision so as to create the highest possible standard of professionalism for our members.

Not only in chairing and administering the branch did he strive for excellence, but also with communications to members, through the Clergy and Church Workers Newsletter, and other documents produced by the branch. His dedication to the branch was not only reputed among branch members, but also throughout the union, with public recognition given to the *modus operandi* of the branch. However, perhaps more significantly, it was Bill's commitment to the members that showed how he cared deeply about their difficult situations, publicly campaigning on the issues of injustice that affected them, whilst in the background ensuring that there was proper representation and pastoral care for every member that needed it in their times of difficulty.

Amicus must strive for the dedication, standards and values of colleagues like Bill in order to build an effective union for the future.

In the summer, Bill took a decision to stand down from being Branch Chair as well as all of his other activity within the branch, and I know that all the Executive, members, and Officers of Amicus who have worked with Bill want to publicly thank him, as well as wish him well for the future. The branch is now chaired by the Rev'd Tony Bell, who has also played an integral role in the branch for the last 10 years.

Rachael Maskell

Amicus National Officer - Non Profit Sector

PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

Part of the speech of the Chairman of the Clergy and Church Worker's Branch of Amicus, the Rev'd Tony Bell, in Portcullis House on 21st September 2004 celebrating the tenth anniversary of the*

inaugural meeting of the clergy section of MSF, now the Clergy and Church Workers Branch of Amicus.

On 15th Sept 1994 British Rail got me, miraculously, into King's Cross from Durham thirty minutes early. When I arrived at St Martin's in the Fields, there was Chris Ball, Stephen Trott, and a BBC News crew. When I was interviewed, I gagged all the comedians who would have undermined us by producing images of clergy on strike and postulated that we would never take industrial action. However, we would be searching by all means possible otherwise for a recourse to justice for clergy who currently have none.

All of us joined the faith groups we did because we love them and have their best interests at heart. We recognise the fallibility and humanity of those authorities, and seek to overturn the injustices we have seen, and we have seen too many.

Ten years ago we were dismissed as a few hotheads. We now negotiate regularly with those who so labelled us. Our cause for employment rights is now well acknowledged. We still have some way to go, and a struggle to gain the rights in law we all should have, and not the selected rights chosen for us by church leaders who wish to implement them in their own self interested way.

We have the curate's egg of a recognition by the C of E that selective employment rights for clergy are a worthy thing, while allowing by inertia the General Synod to drop a private members motion giving clergy the rights to Health and Safety that are enjoyed by almost every other worker in this land. We have also the mixed blessing of a government that likes talking about union causes for workers while refusing to grasp the nettle of establishment interests where denominational hierarchies do not want to be legislated against to force comprehensive rights to be given.

For the past we must pay tribute to Dr. Chris Ball, and to Bill Ward who served the cause for clergy and church workers so tirelessly and despite ill health. While we remember and thank all those who have helped us in the past, the engine room work of this branch, however, is still the grassroots Local Area Reps. who work quietly in support of the membership, avoiding, as most of us would prefer, the publicity sought by the press or even the union hierarchy to promote the cause.

For the future, to hand on to the next generation of the Clergy and Church Workers Branch, we need to win the theological argument. There is still an association of unions in the minds of some clergy

with an old political bigotry, and there are clergy whose own outdated political blinkeredness must be challenged. We need to capitalise on the goodwill that many clergy have for us, but have not joined. It is surprising how many members have joined our ranks after the eye opener of an unjust decision by their superiors. It is also the case that clergy approach me and no doubt other members to advise "I think the Union should be doing something about....." My reply is that they should join and try to make the changes alongside us as members themselves.

The other priority is to continue recruiting. We may well punch above our weight given the union's parliamentary representation. There is no substitute, however, for numerical strength. All of us should be evangelists for the cause of mutual support and responsible unionism. The faith organisations can learn from Trades Union ideals. I have always maintained that TU are fellow travellers with the best of social justice campaigning in the churches. In two cases I could name we have had Forward in Faith members campaigning on behalf of women priests. We have had women ministers working alongside Forward in Faith members on the executive. What unites us far outweighs what divides us.

We share the cause of rights for all workers throughout the world. We have been honoured to provide our skills in the provisions we have made to the Union Movement for Workers' Memorial Day, and again put ourselves at the disposal of the union movement for this purpose. We are well aware that we work alongside members of other faiths and none, as faithful worshippers giving thanks for the fellow travellers in the work for justice for all. I have been alongside Shop Stewards and Union Officers whose regular activity is about pastoral care as much as formal union representation. Unions, like Christians and other faiths are here to serve each other, and look after each other's interests, not merely our own.

My style of chairmanship will need to differ from Bill's since I have two parishes to take up some of my time. I am so glad to have the current executive members with me who now share a cabinet responsibility and much of the workload. I commend particularly the work of Chris Elson as Membership Secretary and Stephen Williams as Local Area Rep co-ordinator and trainer. Derek Hailes, as you will remember, already has a massive portfolio being Secretary and Treasurer.

The future success of the branch will be through good organisation and attention to detail, but we have identified the main reasons for success will be

by the human contact of members locally with other members. Local organisation is essential, and we need more LARs to be identified and brought into the team. New members should have a human voice on the phone somewhere near them, not just a piece of paper from a remote centre. In short, the union is what we all make of it together. I offer my services to enable that to happen.

*** THE FULL VERSION OF TONY'S SPEECH
CAN BE READ ON THE WEBSITE.**

AMICUS the Union Organising in Judaism

Clergy are not seen as being activists. Because of this we are vulnerable. People simply do not expect us to stand up for ourselves because we act under a "higher authority".

In Judaism we are taught it is wrong to withhold pay from workers. We are taught it is wrong to oppress or take advantage of people, wrong to mislead or deceive. All clergy know religious organizations are not immune from bad behaviour. Indeed some use their religious status to bully, oppress and take advantage of clergy workers because clergy are perceived as supercharged volunteers.

As a Rabbi who is dependant on my Synagogue for my housing and standard of living I am acutely aware of my dependence on the goodwill of my employers. Even in Orthodox Judaism we hear stories of Rabbis and clergy dismissed without cause, turned out of their homes and deprived of their pension rights. Bullying by the ecclesiastical authorities is not unheard of.

By belonging to Amicus we protect ourselves and the ones we love. Amicus helps us stand up for ourselves by providing us with legal expertise and the clout of a Union where other employee organizations do not. Where there is a dispute Amicus will help negotiate and allow both parties to come to a dignified solution. In my own experience where there is bullying the mere mention of belonging to Amicus will cause the bully to soften their line. I feel that Amicus is my insurance against abuse. If any Jewish colleagues wish to discuss the help Amicus can give them they are welcome to contact me. I am happy to recommend membership to all clergy. You never know when you may need it.

Rabbi Zvi Solomons

Jewish Chaplain to Chase Farm Hospital

Jewish Chaplain to The University of Hertfordshire

Orthodox Jewish Chaplain to the North London Hospice

Potters Bar and Brookmans Park District Synagogue

Contact Information:

01707 656202 (Home and Synagogue)

Rabbi@pottersbarshul.org.uk

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS -- A METHODIST VIEWPOINT

Yesterday I had a telephone call from the Government's DTI office requesting I attend their Clergy Working Group Meeting on July 13th 2004, I have accepted. Like a fellow Methodist Minister in Bradford who has been nominated by his Union to attend the Working Group, I have concerns over Housing issues and Manses. There are a number of issues within the Methodist system with tied housing that must have some proper scrutiny and regulation in order to care better for ministry staff and their families.

In my own case we have lived in 4 different houses in 7 years. My first station housing situation did not meet our Constitutional Practice standards and resulted in overcrowding and real stress to my family. As many as 7 people have been placed in 3 bedroom houses whilst couples and even single ministers, though they have the stipulated standing order to support them on this, have had 4 bedroom houses. This is unsatisfactory and it needs to be addressed. It shows inequality in manse issues.

I am also concerned about other inequalities. For example it can be shown that whereas some ministers have manses that are alarmed for their care and safety, there are others that might find themselves the only ministerial household who do not have the same standards in place.

We also have Manse inspections. Whilst it is accepted these have to be done it is most unsatisfactory that in District or Circuit inspections, the people who come do it, sometimes as a group of four, have access to every room, then, as minister, we have to preach to those same people on a Sunday. Children of the manse and especially older ones can become resentful of what they see as a real invasion of family privacy. Although children are not ordained or in the employment of the church, their lives are nevertheless affected by those that are. These inspections need to be carried out independently. There are further problems and stress related to coordinating the timing of house and position moves. The list goes on ...

I also believe that through the Unions it might be time to see if we can set up some kind of Forum to represent and support families of manses who are not ordained but living in situations where they need some form of protection. It is vitally important that

there is some structure **independent** of the church to regulate manse and housing matters.

I fully support the work of AMICUS, to get these issues into the open and acted upon. It is important that ministers join unions. Even if matters have not been so difficult in our own individual circumstances surely we have a duty and pastoral obligation to seek justice for those who have had poor care and to make the church authorities face up to it. Otherwise the gospel we preach to society and our calls for justice are false if we are not prepared to put our own houses in order first.

*Deacon Ray Fox - Methodist Minister
and Amicus Member, North London*

AMICUS the Union at the CRE

Clergy and church workers living in the Home Counties during May 2004 enjoyed the opportunity of visiting the Christian Resources Exhibition at Sandown Park, Surrey. Member, Roddie MacLeod had been suggesting the Section would benefit by participation in this annual event at every C&CW annual conference since our foundation. He was exactly right in his belief.

My first impression, as the organiser, was the very high standard maintained by Christian Resources Exhibitions Ltd from the very first contact I made with them. This was the big league. Three hundred and fifty exhibitors covering the whole spectrum of religious life were there to exhibit, give practical demonstrations and offer specialist support. Eight thousand, six hundred and seventy two visitors attended during the four days the exhibition ran and there were an additional two thousand, six hundred and fifty seven exhibitors giving time to make it a truly memorable event. These numbers alone demand a high standard of planning and organisation.

We were, of course, new kids on the block and I made every effort to ensure we made a good showing of ourselves. In this I was ably assisted by Derek Hailes and Chris Elson, both of whom were on hand to set up our stand. I am also grateful to Amicus staff who provided pictures, posters and hand-out-goodies (the latter went like hot cakes). During the four days showing, executive committee members and local area representatives stood watch. To these I say thank you.

With everything from bibles to off-road vehicles for missionaries on show, together with daily lectures and virtual services driven by computers, you might wonder how a trade union fared. Well, it was remarkable. Those of us who stood watch and spoke

to a total of two hundred and forty four seriously interested visitors to our stand were worked off our feet. Of the many memorable instances one or two stand out. The look of surprise on the face of an archdeacon when I told him he would not be the only archdeacon on our register if he joined; my knowing smile of acknowledgement, barely hiding a 'I've heard that one before' to a very senior Salvationist who proclaimed 'we never have any problems with our officers and 'I'm really desperate, I'm not a member, but can you help?' and the almost tearful response of 'thank you' as we exchanged contact details for immediate attention. There was much more; from 'hi, I'm a member, can I have one of those new badges please?' to the expected, but infrequent 'I'm a Christian and don't need a union' – if nothing else it was good to learn there are still one or two innocent, unharmed, folk about.

Was it worth it? Unquestionably yes. We made a good impression on our visitors, had an excellent stand manned by friendly and enthusiastic members. The icing on the cake will be the product of the endeavour. Will we attract new members? I believe we will and to this end I and others are monitoring the monthly 'joiners and leavers' listings. I have also added a postscript to new members' data profile update requests seeking information of how they learned about us. At our June Executive Committee I formally proposed we apply to show again in 2005.

Bill Ward,

Meeting with the Church of England

Representatives of the Amicus Executive had another of their regular meetings with members of the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England on 1 October 2004.

Among a number of items discussed, it was agreed that all ordinands would be receiving a copy of the "Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy" and it was hoped the text could also be placed on the Church of England's website.

Archdeacon Gordon Kuhrt gave a progress report on the work of the McClean group on the "Review of Clergy Terms of Service". Particular mention was made of the training that would be needed for those who would be operating the new procedures in dioceses. Amicus members stressed the need for anti-discrimination measures to be addressed.

Archdeacon Kuhrt also reported on steps that were being taken to foster vocations among minority ethnic people. Amicus members shared with the Ministry Division representatives some concerns about reports they had received about alleged racial

and sex discrimination in parochial appointment committees. It was hoped that the new HR function would allow this to be addressed.

Amicus members also expressed some general concerns about management responsibilities having to be assumed by people who were not good managers. An assurance was given that this would be addressed through training under the post-McClean arrangements.

INFORMATION

Rachael Maskell is the Amicus National Officer for the Non Profit Sector.

Rachael can be reached at:

35 King Street, London WC2E 8JG

0207 420 8978/9 (w)

0207 420 8998 (f)

Rachael.Maskell@amicustheunion.org

www.amicustheunion.org.uk

Articles in this Newsletter have been shortened for publication. The full text may be read in the Clergy Section of the Amicus website. Visit our web page at: **<http://www.amicustheunion.org/nonprofit>**

The Editor of AMICUS, Clergy and Church Workers' Newsletter is Paul Andrew. Contact him at: **C&CWnewsletter@dunvykryn.go-plus.net**

The opinions expressed in AMICUS, Clergy and Church Workers' Newsletter are those of the contributors, not of the Clergy and Church Workers' section. We welcome articles for publication and responses to any item published here. However, we reserve the right to edit articles as necessary for publication.

If members have a problem or a query they should contact their Local Area Representative in the first instance. His/her address and telephone number are listed on your annual data update proforma. If this is not to hand you can contact the new National Helpline number **0845 108 2575**

The Rev'd A de Berry is a Licensed Counsellor willing to assist, 'phone 01636 830 234

AMICUS

Working Environment Unit

40 Bermondsey Street, LONDON SE1 3UD

Tel. 020 7939 7000

