**SBL / AAR Joint Task Force on Labor Policy**
**Sunday, November 18 – 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.**
**McCormick Place, Room S503a.**

# Minutes

**Present:** Rebecca Alpert (AAR), Brian K. Blount (SBL), John Esposito (AAR, co-chair), Jack Fitzmier (AAR), Warren G. Frisina (AAR), John F. Kutsko (SBL), Deborah Minor (AAR), Carol Newsom (SBL), Daniel Schowalter (AAR), John Strong (SBL, co-chair)

## I. Introductions and Introductory Remarks

*Introductions*
After preliminary introductions, the co-chairs initiated the discussion by making clear that members (including council and board members) in both societies have personal and strong ties to labor and a strong commitment to think deeply about ethical issues including those concerning workers' wages, health, well being and their ability to make a life for themselves and family. It was also reiterated that, though the two organizations may have some differences over how to approach these issues we remain committed to the co-annual meeting model for the foreseeable future and pledge to work through these issues within the context of that long-term and ongoing commitment to one another.

*Charge to the Task Force*
The Task Force charge (see Attachment A) was reviewed. It was recognized that we have a need for a more detailed set of protocols and policies to guide the actions of the staffs and elected leadership when faced with hotels and/or vendors who are engaged in a dispute with their staff regarding labor issues. The charge asks the Task Force to: (1) Recommend processes and policies for responding to labor issues; (2) Identify areas where the two organizations need to act in concert and where their responses might be different; (3) Gather relevant information including: (a) a review and evaluation of the past history of labor disputes affecting the annual meetings, (b) a review of the labor situations involving existing contracts including identifying sources of reliable and objective information, and (c) a draft of a standard list of information that needs to be in hand before entering into new contracts.

The proposals we submit to the AAR Board and SBL Council will need to include these three elements and their sub-parts.

## II. Timeline

It was agreed that the Task Force would move with dispatch to gather the relevant information and to put together a set of recommendations for both the SBL Council and AAR Board to consider as early as possible. A meeting in Atlanta in the early part of the new year will be set up. Subsequent meetings will be undertaken if they are necessary. Everyone agreed to be in touch electronically as needed.

*Action item: The Executive Directors will circulate a Doodle Poll seeking weekend dates in January or early February for a meeting in Atlanta.*

## III. Transparency

Aiming for maximum transparency, it was agreed that the Task Force would make frequent and regular reports of its deliberations and decisions to both the memberships and the SBL Council and AAR Board.

*Action item: These minutes will be circulated among the AAR Board and SBL Council members and posted to the organization's websites in the appropriate places.*

## IV. Clarification of distinction between *existing* and *new* contracts; timeline redux

It was acknowledged that the use of the term "future contract" was inadequate and imprecise for these discussions. It was determined that the scope of our charge includes a review of all policies and procedures involving *existing* (already signed) contracts as well as *new* (yet to be signed) contracts. Thus, the policies we recommend need to include instructions on how to handle disputes involving vendors and hotels with whom we have existing contracts. It also means that we will recommend policies and procedures for undertaking new contracts. As a result, these policies are likely to have an immediate impact as the AAR and SBL routinely adjust existing contracts and add new contracts for meetings that are already planned as circumstances change.

## V. Size, pluses and minuses

It was noted that our size offers both advantages and disadvantages when it comes to handling labor disputes. On the one hand, our size provides considerable leverage as hotels and cities are all vying for the positive financial impact (over $42,000,000 by one estimate). Moreover our combined buying power has brought an estimated $7,300,000 in savings to our organizations over a ten-year period. On the other hand, the size and scope of our meeting makes it very difficult to "turn on a dime" at the last minute, a fact known by the hotels and vendors with whom we must negotiate when a labor dispute arises close to a meeting date.

## VI. Clarification of AAR's and SBL's relationship with INMEX

Several years ago, in an effort to raise the visibility of workers' disputes with hotel and other hospitality vendors, a website called INMEX was established. It aggregated information from a variety of sources, and solicited support from societies that host conferences and annual meetings. The AAR and SBL, in a gesture of good will agreed to sign statements of support. Those statements were not binding commitments.

Subsequently, a new meeting management company was created by the same group using the same name. It has been suggested that this group be considered as handlers of future meeting negotiations. A decision along those lines would depend on an assessment of INMEX's ability to handle a meeting of our size and complexity.

It was also noted that AAR and SBL currently have a Service Agreement to work with Experient around site selection, contract negotiation and managing the Annual Meetings. Our hotel and convention center contracts through 2021 commit us to paying Experient a commission for site selection and contract negotiation services rendered. As an added benefit Experient has agreed to provide meeting management services for that period as well.

## VII. Review of Annual Business Meetings' Discussion of the Labor Issue

### SBL

SBL's business meeting included a review of actions taken leading up to this meeting and a general degree of satisfaction with those actions was expressed. In looking ahead the SBL Council has urged that future deliberations about these issues be guided by four principles:

1. That we do all we can to inform the membership about labor disputes as they arise and, when possible, before registration and housing opens.
2. That we do all we can to negotiate reductions in attrition rates and other contract commitments on the assumption that some members will not want to patronize a boycotted property, thereby honoring members' choices and fulfilling our obligation to minimize the financial impact of such actions.
3. That we do all we can to lower programmatic usage in the affected hotels so as to minimize or eliminate the possibility that an SBL member would have to choose between attending an SBL activity or function and honoring his or her personal commitments.
4. That we honor our contracts.

### AAR

At the AAR's business meeting, the Executive Director explained the steps taken in this most recent dispute which in all but a few instances were consistent with steps taken by SBL. In general there was appreciation among those attending the meeting for the positive impact of those decisions.

The AAR's business meeting also included consideration of a member sponsored resolution (see Attachment B) urging the AAR's Board to consider ways to be even more supportive of union workers in the future and to specifically avoid patronizing hotels (and other vendors) who are involved in labor disputes, especially in circumstances where the unions have called for a boycott or are on strike.

It was explained that member resolutions are recommendations to the AAR Board. The AAR Board will take up the resolution at its next meeting. In addition, it is assumed that the AAR Board will want to hear from the Labor Policy Task Force before taking any final action involving these issues.

In subsequent discussion of the SBL's four points it was generally agreed that points 1, 2 and 3 are not controversial. Gaining greater precision over when, if ever, either organization might feel obligated to step away from a contract is one of the central questions the Task Force will need to address in its recommendations. In addition, because AAR and SBL have cosigned existing contracts as a "joint venture," contractual obligations

necessitate mutual indemnification, an issue that has been previously undefined. Therefore, if there turn out to be differences in how the two organizations feel about stepping away from a contract, the Task Force will establish procedures, protocols and policies for apportioning the financial penalties that might follow upon such an action.

**VIII. Not Just a Hotel Issue – this is about developing a Labor Policy**

The Task Force is aware that these issues do not just involve hotels and hotel workers. Virtually all of our vendors could become involved in a labor dispute where workers call for a boycott or strike. As a result, while the focus of the Task Force will be on hotels and the annual meeting, we need to be aware that we are establishing policies that have implications for other aspects of the AAR and SBL operations.

**IX. Failed attempt to put together a Plenary Session for this meeting**

There was general regret over our inability to put together a plenary session on labor issues for this meeting. While many factors contributed, the fact that planning did not begin until quite late (by meeting planning standards) was certainly the major factor. This experience points to the need to begin such planning earlier. The possibility of such a session in Baltimore is something that the SBL Council and AAR Board might want to consider.

**X. Looking Forward**

It was agreed that we will attempt to meet face to face in the very near future. If not all Task Force members can attend, we can use speaker-phones and Skype to bring in those who can't be there physically. As a fall back position we might go to an all WebEx format, with everyone attending virtually. There was consensus that it is important that we meet in whatever way we can sooner rather than later.

As part of the information gathering dimension of the next Task Force meeting, there was a request that representatives from Experient be present for part of the meeting to walk the group through some of the logistical details involved with making contracts, including their take on the kind of leverage we have at the various stages of the meeting planning process.

*Action item: Executive Directors will invite Experient to make a presentation at the next Task Force Meeting.*

There was also a request for a report from the two executive directors that would include a time line and list of the steps that were taken this year. There was general agreement that though we were operating without fixed policies and having to make decisions on the fly, the outcome was in many ways quite good and consistent with many of the objectives expressed in our two annual business meetings. So, in looking to establish policies, protocols and guidelines for future situations, it makes sense to look carefully at what went well, while remembering what also created the most significant problems. With that in mind we might also be better positioned to imagine ways we could go further or be more effective in serving the members for whom this is a particularly important issue.

*Action item: Executive Directors will provide the Task Force with a report summarizing the time line and steps taken this year, including an evaluation of how things went and how they might have gone better.*

It was also suggested that given the general agreement over much that is already present in the 4 points put forward at the SBL business meeting, these would serve as a starting point for undertaking our discussion of the proper procedures, protocols and policies for handling future situations. Doing so, does not prejudge or eliminate from consideration any of the ways those points might be extended or amended. But there was consensus that since we can see much common ground in those points, we do well to begin with what we already agree on.

Finally, noting that the Executive Directors have heard from a significant number of their members on this issue, and noting as well that the Executive Directors are the ones most in touch with the specific elements of the contract process and its subtleties, the Task Force asked the Executive Directors to bring forward specific recommendations that the Task Force can discuss, respond to, refine, or even replace. The point here was to use their expertise to keep the Task Force's focus on concrete and practical decisions that will enable us to make recommendations to the SBL Council and the AAR Board that will ultimately provide the staff with the kind of specific guidelines and policies they need to be able to carry out their responsibilities.

*Action item: As appropriate, the Executive Directors will bring forward for discussion specific recommendations for policies, procedures and protocols that would enable both organizations to respond to the concerns raised by members around labor issues.*

*The meeting adjourned at 10:50 AM.*

# Attachment A

## AAR-SBL Joint Task Force on Annual Meeting Protocols and Policies (AMPP)

Introduction:

AAR and SBL are guided by a Letter of Intent (LOI) to coordinate their efforts in mounting Annual Meetings. Ventures of this size and complexity, undertaken together by two large societies with differing (though complementary) missions and cultures, pose challenges when conditions at the meeting site call for a response from both organizations. In response to one such challenge (labor action at a headquarters hotel with which the societies have jointly contracted), the AAR and SBL recognize the need for a more detailed set of protocols and policies to guide the actions of staff and elected leadership.

Charge:

Within the mission of the two organizations, which is stated in their individual charters and guides the scope of their work (see below), the AMPP Task Force will report to the AAR Board of Directors and to the SBL Council as follows:

1. Recommend processes and priorities for reducing usage in a property (such as a hotel or convention center) with whom the organizations hold a joint contract, whenever the organizations agree that such reductions are advisable in light of labor action against the property or its corporate owners or their partners, or in light of other conditions at the property that make the original usage envisioned in the contracts problematic for the organizations' membership. Usage that might be reduced includes food and beverage commitments, attrition percentages for sleeping rooms, and event space. Resulting protocols should guide the organizations in negotiating reductions that are consistent, scalable, and sustainable.
2. Identify particular actions and responses, and outline spheres of activity, in which the two organizations can engage independently of one another when responding to local conditions at a meeting site. These independent actions and spheres of activity cannot jeopardize material commitments or brand commitments that the organizations have made to each other explicitly in the LOI, cannot violate the general norms of good will and good faith on which the cooperation of the organizations depends, and must take into consideration the responsibilities each organization owes to its affiliated societies (SBL Affiliates and AAR Related Scholarly Organizations).
3. Review and evaluate past history of labor disputes affecting the Annual Meetings, including actions taken by AAR and SBL in response. Review expiration dates of labor contracts affecting hotel and meeting venues in upcoming years for which contracts have been signed. Identify reliable, objective sources of information on relevant conditions (such as corporate policy, local or national labor action, state and local law) and develop protocols for research that should be undertaken before entering into contract negotiations. Recommend policies for contracts with headquarter hotels (e.g., mandatory contract clauses involving labor conditions or discriminatory environments) that the Task Force determines are in keeping with the mission, values, and best interest of both organizations.

AAR Mission and Values:

- Mission: promote reflection upon and understanding of religious traditions, issues, questions, and values through excellence in scholarship and teaching in the field of religion.
- Values: The AAR is committed to promoting equity, responsibility, and democratic accountability within the academic study of religion and in the work of the AAR itself.

  [Please see http://www.aarweb.org/About_AAR/Mission_Statement/default.asp]

SBL Mission and Values:

- SBL exists to foster biblical scholarship.
- Core Values: Accountability; Collaboration; Collegiality; Critical Inquiry; Inclusivity; Openness to Change; Professionalism; Respect for Diversity; Scholarly Integrity; Tolerance

  [For a fuller statement of SBL's mission, Strategic Vision, and Core Values, see http://www.sbl-site.org/aboutus.aspx]

**Attachment B**

October 11th, 2012

Dear American Academy of Religion Board and Executive Director,

As a member of the AAR, I wish to bring forward the included resolution to be considered at the 2012 annual business meeting on November 18th, 2012.

I want to thank you for the work you have done this year to respect the Hyatt worker's boycott. In light of this important effort, we the undersigned propose this resolution to encourage the ongoing commitment in the academy to worker's rights and just labor practices.

I look forward to the meeting. Please do not hesitate to call or email with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Roncolato

Chicago Theological Seminary
312-519-8415
croncolato@ctschicago.edu

# American Academy of Religion Resolution

RESOLVED: The American Academy of Religion will add protective language to all future contracts with hotels and conference centers for annual meetings declaring that if there is a boycott, strike, lockout, picketing or other labor dispute at the contracted facility, the AAR will be released from all contractual obligations without charge or penalty. Furthermore, the AAR will not patronize a hotel or conference center that is in the midst of a boycott, strike, lockout, picketing or other labor dispute. This resolution is consistent with the purpose and values statements as published on the AAR website: the religious traditions as understood and critically evaluated in our work support the values of equal human dignity and worth. In addition, the general public expects professional organizations that teach religion to be consistent with that value. We serve our members through this consistency, as some might actually be prevented from attending meetings held in facilities where there are labor disputes because of their religious and/or ethical convictions. Finally, this resolution is highly congruent with the AAR values statement as "equity, responsibility and democratic accountability" are furthered through respect for the rights of all workers in facilities we patronize through our dues and fees.

- Travis Ables, Webster Groves, Eden Theological Seminary
- Jon Alexander, Providence, Providence College
- Christopher Ashley, New York, Union Theological Seminary
- Jay Atkinson, El Sobrante, California, Starr King Schoo for the Ministry, Berkeley, Calif.
- Rick Axtell, Danville, KY, Centre College
- Margaret Aymer, Decatur, GA, Interdenominational Theological Center
- Zahra Ayubi, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Wesley Barker, Atlanta, Georgia State University
- Beth Berkowitz, Brooklyn, NY, Barnard College
- Jared Beverly, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary NO
- Varuni Bhatia, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- Brian Blackmore, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Ward Blanton, Glasgow, Scotland, University of Glasgow L-2011
- Annie Blazer, Richmond va, College of William and mary
- Arun Brahmbhatt, Toronto, University of Toronto
- Karen Bray, New York, Drew University
- Stephanie Brehm, Evanston, IL, Northwestern University
- Rita Brock, Oakland, Brite Divinity School
- Pamela Brubaker, Thousand Oaks, California Lutheran University
- Edward Butler, New York, Independent Scholar L-2009
- Michael Buttrey, Blaine, WA, Toronto School of Theology
- Jennifer Callaghan, CHICAGO, Northwestern University
- Elizabeth Castelli, New York, Barnard College
- Thomas Cattoi, Berkeley, Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University
- Vincent Cervantes, Los Angeles, University of Southern California

# American Academy of Religion Resolution

- Rebecca Chabot, Denver, University of Denver/Iliff School of Theology
- Dorothy Chang, New York, Columbia University
- Daniel Cheifer, Syracuse, Syracuse University L – 2009
- Gina Cogan, Boston, Boston University
- Aryeh Cohen, Los Angeles, American Jewish University
- Thia Cooper, St. Peter, Gustavus Adolphus college
- Britt Cox, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Clayton Crockett, Conway, University of Central Arkansas
- David Dault, Mamphis, Christian Brothers University
- Amanullah De Sondy, Miami, University of Miami
- Teresa Delgado, New Rochelle, Iona College
- Brando Denison, Jacksonville, University of North Florida
- Douglas Duckworth, Johnson City, ETSU
- Laurence Edwards, Chicago, IL, DePaul University
- Jodi Eichler-Levine, Oshkosh WI, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
- Aaron Ellis, Tallahassee, Florida State University
- Marvin Ellison, Portland, Bangor Theological Seminary
- Jacob J. Erickson, , Drew University
- Thomas Fabisiak, Atlanta, Emory
- Rev. Danny Fisher, Los Angeles, CA, University of the West
- Elaine Fisher, New York, Columbia
- Kathleen Foody, Charleston, College of Charleston
- Frida Furman, Chicago, DePaul University
- Peter Gathje, Memphis, Memphis Theological Seminary
- Robert M Geraci, Bronx, NY, Manhattan College
- Pinchas Giller, Los Angeles, American Jewish University
- George Gonzalez, New York, NY, Monmouth University
- P. Joshua Griffin, Seattle, University of Washington
- Rachel Gross, New York, Princeton University
- Najam Haider, New York City, Barnard College
- Brian Hamilton-Vise, South Bend, IN, University of Notre Dame
- Juliane Hammer, Carrboro, UNC Chapel Hill
- Gail Hamner, Syracuse, Syracuse University
- James Hare, Brooklyn, NY, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation
- Joel Harrison, Evanston, Northwestern University
- Colleen Hartung, Sun Prairie WI, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Jennifer Harvey, Des Moines, Drake University
- John Hawley, New York, Barnard College
- Alyssa Henning, Chicago, IL, Northwestern University
- Peter Herman, Washington, DC, Georgetown University
- Mary Hess, St. Paul, Luther Seminary
- Mary Hobgood, Worcester, College of the Holy Cross
- Jennifer Hockenbery, Milwaukee, Mt Mary College
- Hannah Hofheinz, Cambridge, MA, Harvard
- Suzanne Holland, Tacoma, University of Puget Sound
- Aaron Hollander, Chicago, University of Chicago
- Emily Holmes, Memphis, Christian Brothers University
- Charon Hribar, New York, Drew University
- Amy Hyne, Austin, University of Texas at Austin
- Elizabeth Ingenthron, Oakland, Graduate Theological Union
- Brannon Ingram, Evanston, Northwestern University
- Mary Jo Iozzio, Hollywood, Barry University
- Andrea Jain, Indianapolis, IUPUI
- Lynn Jencks, Evanston, IL, Northwestern University
- Willis Jenkins, New Haven, Yale Divinity School
- Anne Joh, Evanston, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary
- Ann Johnston, Bangor, Maine 04401, Bangor Theological Seminary
- Melanie Jones, Chicago, IL, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Jennifer Kash, Indianapolis, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis
- M. Whitney Kelting, Boston, Northeastern University
- Erin Kidd, Milwaukee, Marquette University

# American Academy of Religion Resolution

- Richard King, Glasgow, University of Glasgow
- Ste Kinney, Emeryville, Graduate Theological Union
- Chris Klassen, Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University
- Paul Knitter, New York, Union Theological Seminary
- Patricia Kolbe, Philadelphia, Temple University
- Adam Kotsko, Chicago, Shimer College
- Kurt Kuhwald, Oakland, Starr King School for the Ministry
- Kirk Laubenstein, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Joel Layton, Berkeley, Graduate Theological Union
- John Leonard, Madison, WI, Edgewood College
- Gabriella Lettini, Berkeley, Starr King School for the Ministry-GTU
- Rachel Lindsey, Tallahassee, FL, Florida Sate University
- Vincent Lloyd, Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University
- Nathan Loewen, Montreal, Vanier college
- Scott MacDougall, New York, New York
- Gerard Mannion, San Diego, University of San Diego
- Craig Martin, New York, St. Thomas Aquinas College
- James Mastaler, CHICAGO, Loyola University Chicago
- Stephanie May, , Brandeis University
- James McGrath, Indianapolis, Butler University
- Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley, Evanston, IL, Northwestern University
- Derek Michaud, Fairfield. ME, Boston University
- Rachel Mikva, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Matthew Miller, St. Louis, Washington University in St. Louis
- Jordan Miller, Newport, RI, Salve Regina University
- Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst, Burlington, VT, University of Vermont
- Daniel Moseson, Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University
- Martin Nguyen, Bridgeport, Fairfield University
- Elaine Nogueira-Godsey, Cape Town, Univeristy Of Cape Town
- Courtney ODell-Chaib, Syracuse, Syracuse University
- Lisa Owen, Denton, University of North Texas
- Rev. Andrew Packman, Chicago, The Divinity School at the University of Chicago
- Christine Pae, Granville, OH, Denison University
- Scott Paeth, Chicago, DePaul University
- Su Yon Pak, New York, Union Theological Seminary
- Bruce Paolozzi, Claremont, Claremont Graduate University
- HiRho Park, Nashville, Boston University
- Gary Peluso-Verdend, Tulsa, Phillips Theological Seminary
- Prea Persaud, Syracuse, Syracuse University
- Kristian Petersen, Saint Peter, Gustavus Adolphus College
- Anthony Petro, Boston, Boston University
- Julie Pfau, Philadelphia, Temple University
- Jon Phillips, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Wayne Proudfoot, New York, Columbia University
- Tiffany Puett, Austin, University of Waterloo
- Liza Rankow, Oakland, OneLife Institute
- Michal Raucher, Evanston, Northwestern University
- Terry Reeder, Syracuse, Syracuse University
- Kathryn Reklis, New York, Fordham University
- Patrick Reyes, Riverside, Claremont Lincoln University
- Erica Richmond, NYC, Union Theological Seminary
- Susan Ridgely, Madison, UW Oshkosh
- Henry Morisada Rietz, Grinnell, Grinnell College
- Carolyn Roncolato, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Christopher Roussel, New Orleans, Independent Academic
- Donovan Schaefer, Haverford, Haverford College
- Laurel Schneider, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary

# American Academy of Religion Resolution

- Yuki Schwartz, Chicago, Garrett Theological Seminary
- Ariel Schwartz, Chicago, Northwestern University
- Matt Sheedy, Winnipeg, University of Manitoba
- David Shefferman, Bronx, NY, Manhattan College
- Michael Shelley, Chicago, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
- Harpreet Singh, Cambridge, Harvard University
- Teresa Smallwood, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Per Smith, Boston, Boston University
- Andrea Smith, Riverside, CA, UC Riverside
- Anthony Paul Smith, Philadelphia, La Salle University
- Susan Soric, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Susan Spilecki, Brighton, MIT
- Tulasi srinivas, Boston, USA, Emerson College
- Jennifer Sta.Ana, San Francisco, University of San Francisco
- Amina Steinfels, South Hadley, Mount Holyoke College
- Kenneth Surin, Durham NC, Duke University
- Robert Tappan, Towson, Towson University
- Jennifer Tiitsman, Carrboro, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- J. Terry Todd, New York, Drew Theological School
- Linn Tonstad, New Haven, Yale Divinity School
- Emilie Townes, New Haven, Yale Divinity School
- Cristina Traina, Evanston, IL, Northwestern University
- Karen Villanueva, San Francisco, CA, California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS)
- Karl James Villarmea, Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Steven Vose, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania
- Jule Ward, Chicago, DePaul University
- Christian Wedemeyer, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago
- Judith Weisenfeld, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University
- Stephanie Wolfe, Chicago, Northwestern University
- Laishan Yip, Berkeley, Graduate Theological Union