



March 3, 2011

Dear SBL Members and Annual Meeting Participants,

We write today for two reasons. First, we want to share our excitement about our upcoming Annual Meeting in San Francisco. This meeting marks an important moment in our history, as we resume holding concurrent Annual Meetings with the American Academy of Religion and several other affiliated and related organizations. These concurrent gatherings will maintain the “traditional” meeting dates – the weekend before the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday, this year November 19-22. The Call for Papers has been issued, proposals are being submitted, special sessions planned, the layouts of the Exhibit Hall and Employment Center are being finalized, and registration is soon to open. At this point, it looks to be not only another excellent Annual Meeting but a momentous one.

Second, we want to share some information about one of the hotels selected six years ago for our meeting. The labor contract between the hotel workers at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square as well as a number of other San Francisco hotels lapsed in August of 2009, and they are in the process of negotiating a new agreement. While the negotiations are pending, the hotel staff, represented by Unite Here, continue to work under the terms of the expired agreement. Service at the Hilton Union Square has not been affected and the hotel advises us that they are confident a new agreement will be in place prior to our Annual Meeting. It is our hope that the hotels and the union come to terms soon and ratify a new contract that is fair to all parties.

In the meantime, Unite Here has urged a boycott of the Hilton Union Square until a new contract is ratified. Our Council, sensitive to the SBL’s respect for the rights, dignity, and worth of all people has considered how to respond to this boycott. After careful reflection, we have concluded that we will continue our arrangement with the Hilton Union Square but on a modified scale. In addition to the fact that cancelling the contract with the Hilton would be a significant financial liability to SBL and AAR, the Hilton will serve to provide much needed sleeping rooms for our growing meeting. It is important to note, however, that out of deference to the union’s position, SBL and AAR have agreed to move several functions to other nearby hotels.

Again, our hope is that the union and the hotels are able to ratify a new contract well in advance of our meeting. We are closely monitoring this situation and will keep the membership posted on any new developments.

Sincerely,

The SBL Council