

Hey everyone,

I found a pretty cool article about Protestant congregations and homosexuality that I thought I'd share with you guys: Cage and Wildman (2008). "Facilitators and Advocates: How Mainline Protestant Clergy Respond to Homosexuality." *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 587-603.

Cage and Wildman collected the perspectives of some "mainline Protestant" ministers (as well as some members of their congregations), which helped to shed some light on some pervading feelings of homo-anxiety among the Protestant camp. For the most part, any fear of homosexuals seemed to come from either widespread (false) generalizations, or from a fear of the change that could potentially be brought about through the implications of homosexual acceptance.

For example, one minister reported that the general sentiment circulating through his church community was that homosexuals were more "predatory" than heterosexuals. As he explained, the notion of homosexuality and child molestation were very thinly separated concepts in the minds of his congregants.

These respondents also suggested that homosexuality in some way might initiate a change in historical practice and/or institutions, and as such, caused an exceeding level of anxiety. For example, one minister noted that if homosexuality is something that will become considered natural and approved of by God, several millennia of theological teaching would be undermined, and such a thing is simply a "big deal" (p. 594).

So, for the most part, it would appear that a lot of the anxiety surrounding homosexuality in churches (at least, if we are to generalize from this article) stems from a lack of experience with the gay community, and/or from the shifting paradigm that its acceptance might incite. While the former might be "cured" through educating the church community, the latter poses a more interesting problem for LGBT acceptance; I imagine change will be slow if half of the present fear surrounds the notion of change itself.

Stephen