



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

### **Sodomites welcomed to the Lord's Supper by many Dutch Protestant Churches**

The following articles are translations of reports on Dutch websites detailing a recent survey of views in several Dutch reformed denominations on the subject of homosexuality. The reports give an insight in the general state of mainline Reformed Churches in Holland, and even of some that would claim to be more conservative. The reports give alarming evidence of the rapid advance of the sodomite agenda within the ranks of professing Christianity. This is evidence of the great apostasy at work that the Saviour warns of, Luke 17:28-30.

This research provides valuable context for our recent **article on the compromise of Dr. Joel Beeke in preaching for HHK congregations in Holland**. That denomination was not included in the survey referred to in the reports below, but it too is polluted with compromise on this issue. Two of its ministers have advocated for sodomites to be accepted in the church and even into church offices. One of these men 'came out' as a sodomite in 2014 and was never disciplined. He has just published his views for the second time in the press, claiming the blessing and support of God in his evil way, and encouraging reformed young people to join him in 'coming out'. It is becoming increasingly clear that the HHK is simply conforming to the trends of other compromised reformed churches in Holland.

As one of the reports below states, current trends in church and state "will change the role of gays in the churches and the pressure on the churches to make room for them is only expected to increase." In spite of that pressure God's people must stand against the onslaught of wickedness that apostasy is bringing in like a flood, and separate from those who are prepared to compromise with it.

### **Article from the Reformed Daily, November 3, 2016.**

**Original article [here](#).**

It is questionable whether there is going to be more space in Protestant churches for gay men. That conclusion was drawn on Thursday by the Christian newsmagazine *The New Course* after an investigation into five churches. There appears still to be considerable differences in the acceptance of homosexuality.

The study was conducted among pastors and ministers of five churches: the ABC congregations (Baptist and CAMA-congregations), the Christian Reformed Churches, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed Churches Liberated and congregations in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands that are affiliated with the Reformed Alliance.

In one in three instances, gays in a relationship are welcome to partake of the Lord's supper in the five churches. The editors of the magazine call it remarkable that 17 percent of surveyed pastors and ministers say that right now no people with homosexual feelings are involved in their congregation. That could be an indication according to *The New Course* "that there are many gay men that have not come out of the closet yet".

In 90 percent of the surveyed churches or congregations homosexuality is discussable. Four out of five churches or congregations are not against homosexual feelings, but are against entering into a relationship, say the figures of *The New Course*. However, in 35 percent of the surveyed churches and congregations persons with a homosexual relationship are welcome to partake of the Lord's supper.

Other questions that *The New Course* submitted to the ministers and pastors, pertained to the access to the different offices and other functions in the Church, the presence of a policy or decision document, the vision of the congregation, the church and the pastor on homosexuality and the possibility of the blessing of a same-sex marriage or non-marital gay relationship.

The question of how to deal with homosexuality resulted, in a third of the congregations, in a policy in



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which the vision of homosexuality is recorded. Many other churches are still working on this.

A total of 361 questionnaires were completed, representing a response rate of 35 percent. The study of The New Course was conducted by Sietske Beiboer, graduating at Ede Christian University (CHE).

### Article from De Nieuwe Koers, November 2, 2016.

#### Original article [here](#).

Congregations known as as orthodox Protestant will give more space to gays, the newspaper, Nederlands Dagblad, wrote on 10 October. Is there indeed a change afoot? *The New Course* was investigating the situation of gay people in the church.

The churches have been speaking about homosexuality for decades now. Under public pressure, there has been movement in vision, policy and practice. Meanwhile, a homosexual relationship is fully accepted in society, even though aggression and discrimination against gay people are increasing rather than decreasing.

What happens at the local level is much less known.

What about the church? We hear about synodal discussions, but of what happens at the local level, much less is known. Faith communities locally that differ from national cadres, are noted in the media, but what happens under the radar? Could there be fundamental changes going on in silence?

In collaboration with Sietske Beiboer, graduating at the Christian University Ede, *The New Course* distributed last summer a questionnaire among pastors and ministers from five denominations and movements within them: the Reformed Alliance in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Christian Reformed Churches, the Reformed Churches (liberated) and the Alliance of Baptists and CAMA congregations (ABC congregations).

#### National trend

Nationwide, there appears to be in each investigated church federation talk of reflection and decision-making around the theme of homosexuality. Local churches and congregations are encouraged to keep the conversation going and to incorporate a pastoral attitude. The general trend is that people accept the having of homosexual feelings. But the surveyed churches leave little room in their synod reports and decisions for gay relationships. Only in the Dutch Reformed Churches is there a little support of this point, even though a proposal to open the ministry to cohabiting gays didn't get accepted this spring.

Reformed Alliance congregations are included in the church order and synod decisions of the Protestant Church Netherlands, but in June 2015 four prominent "alliancers" wrote an open letter in their own paper The Friend of Truth. The tenor of the letter is that the conversation should be kept going, and that primarily a pastoral approach should be chosen. It warns of a rigid application of general rules, but is however clear that a homosexual relationship is rejected by the Bible.

#### Local discussion

Then locally. The study shows that the subject is on the agenda of a large majority of the respondents. Ninety percent of respondents indicated that homosexuality was topic of conversation one way or another during the last year. In the 2015-2016 church season in particular pastoral discussions (73 percent), elders - or church councils (68 percent), catechism classes (65 percent) and in the Sunday services (42 percent). A third of the congregations have drawn up a document in which the vision on homosexuality is recorded. A large part of the remaining congregations indicates that a policy is yet to come.



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17 percent of pastors know of no gays or lesbians within their congregation.

Most pastors also know gay people, a third of them also gays with a relationship. However, 17 percent of pastors say not to know any gay people within their congregation, which could indicate that there are many gay men that have not come out of the closet. Is the atmosphere for this secure enough? Nationally many denominations advocate for a safe and open environment, without taboos. But whether this is so is, based on our research, hard to say.

### Relationships and marriage

Almost all the surveyed churches see homosexuality as a consequence of the Fall. Only a few pastors see it as a variation which the Creator laid in the creation. For one in five church councils this does not mean that a homosexual relationship has to be rejected. For respondents from the Reformed alliance and ABC congregations, this percentage is significantly lower than the Dutch Reformed churches; the rest are in between. The prevailing view in most congregations that reject relationships, is that homosexual feelings are OK, but that the Bible leaves no room to practice it. So they ask of gay congregants to live celibate.

In line with the national policy of the churches, the blessing of gay marriages in congregations does not occur. At least it is not allowed anywhere. A small number of congregations (3.3 percent) choose to bless non-marital relationships between gay people, while they continue to see marriage as an exclusive relationship between a man and a woman. This number is divided about equally between the denominations.

### Lord's Supper and Ministry

An exciting question is whether gays, with or without a relationship, are welcome to the sacrament. There are a few congregations that indicate that people with a homosexual relationship are not even welcome in the Sunday service. In all other congregations, everyone is welcome. Regarding the participation of the sacrament it is different. Approximately one third of the congregations let people with a homosexual relationship partake of the sacrament. For people with homosexual feelings, but without a relationship partaking of the Lord's Supper is virtually nowhere a problem. A statistically negligible number of congregations indicates that this is not an option.

The differences between denominations are striking. The Dutch Reformed Churches allowed, in 90 percent of the surveyed congregations, a gay in a relationship to take part of the sacrament. Within the Reformed Alliance, this is the lowest, 17 percent. In ABC congregations, taking a conservative position in general when it comes to gay relationships, still participation in the sacrament is allowed in more than half of the congregations. The difference between the ABC and reformed alliance congregations can probably be explained by the vision of the sacrament. Also, ABC congregations issued a nationwide call not to deny the sacrament to anyone, even those with a homosexual relationship, if they sincerely want to follow and obey Jesus.

### The differences between denominations are striking.

In the call to an office local policy is stricter, partly because of national decisions which they must conform to. In 7 percent of the congregations a gay with a relationship can be an elder or deacon. For pastors this is 4 percent. For gay men with no relationship the office of elder or deacon seems accessible in 90 percent of the congregations. For pastors it is slightly lower, 82 percent.

### The future

Is there a trend to be seen over time? Are there fundamental changes taking place? This study does not say anything about that. It seems that the emphasis is being placed more explicitly on a pastoral approach. This also makes it seem that access to the sacrament for gay couples have become broader.



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There is more openness, thereby resulting in a safer environment. One effect of this approach is, however, that the homosexual fellow man continues to be seen as a pastoral case. The usual distinction between feelings and practice in churches reinforces that. That rubs with social development of full acceptance and equality. This will change the role of gays in the churches and the pressure on the churches to make room for them is only expected to increase.

The focus on being a missionary church and the consequent openness to new entrants will generate new questions for churches. Add to this the ongoing social developments regarding adoption by gay couples, gender transitions, intersexuality and more parent families and you know that the churches will have a full agenda in the foreseeable future.

Arie Kok

### THE RESEARCH REPORT

(Below is a summary of the research report that both of the articles above were commenting on.)

The complete report from researcher Sietske Beiboer and the statistical reports may, giving reasons, be obtained from the editors of The New Course, [redactie@denieuwekoers.nl](mailto:redactie@denieuwekoers.nl).

### THE SIX MAIN POINTS

- Homosexuality is a topic that is being discussed in the vast majority of Orthodox churches and congregations and policy is made pertaining to it.
- The local Churches' policies differ only in exceptional cases from national policy or synodical decisions.
- The vast majority of the congregations (with the exception of the Dutch Reformed Churches) maintains a separation between identity and practice: you are allowed to have homosexual feelings, but you should not act in practice.
- This also translates to the opening of offices. Gays without a relationship can be a deacon, elder, minister in the vast majority of congregations. With a relationship this is very limited. For pastors there is a bit less space than for elders and deacons.
- There is no blessing of a same-sex marriage in any of the congregations involved. For the blessing of a homosexual relationship other than a marriage, only 3 percent of the churches and congregations that participated in the research area will allow it.
- In about one third of the surveyed congregations are gays with a relationship welcome at the Lord's Supper There are some striking differences between denominations.

### WHO ARE QUESTIONED?

In total, 889 questionnaires were given out, of which 361 were completed. Each congregation completed one list maximum, in 93 percent of cases, the pastor filled out the questionnaire, in the other cases a church board member or church employee. In each of the targeted churches at least one-third of those approached responded.

### ARE THERE GAY MEN KNOWN IN THE CONGREGATION?

17 percent of pastors surveyed say they don't know any gay people. A small 35 percent say that they know gay people who have a homosexual relationship. On behalf of the ABC congregations, only one re-



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spondent said that. The NGK (Dutch reformed) 60 percent of respondents answered that they know gays with a relationship within the congregation, in the Reformed alliance congregations that is 29 percent, the Reformed-liberated and Christian Reformed churches was about 35 percent.

### **THE VISION OF THE CHURCH BOARD?**

What is the vision of the church board on homosexuality, whether it is written in a policy or not? This has been discussed in three-quarters of the surveyed boards. Thereof between 1 and 5 percent said they do not see homosexuality as a consequence of the Fall. 18 percent of respondents indicated that this does not mean that having homosexual feelings or relationship is rejected. Here are clear differences: for the Reformed Alliance 11 percent believe this; the Dutch Reformed Churches, 52 percent; in the ABC congregations, 0 percent; (i.e. that homosexual relationships or feelings are OK)

In three quarters of the boards a separation is made between feelings and practice, you may be it, but you can not do it. For the Reformed Alliance and ABC congregations this percentage is the highest: 82 and 88 percent, the Dutch Reformed Churches at 27 percent the lowest. Twelve boards (4 percent) disapprove of having homosexual feelings, and are consequently not in favor of a relationship.

### **Definition**

In common parlance is now spoken of lgbt'ers, which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Churches talk mainly about homosexuality. Therefore, we have used that term, and when we talk about gay people, we mean both men and women.



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