

Peace & Justice Report

For the week of February 20, 2015



WHERE DO AMERICANS STAND ON GAY ACCEPTANCE?

Glaad, a prominent gay rights group, commissioned a Gallup poll to figure out where Americans are on the issue of how uncomfortable they are with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Some of the results are as follows:

30% who did not identify themselves as any of the aforementioned groups said that they would feel unsettled if their physician or child's teacher identified with one of these groups;

45% said they would feel uneasy about bringing their child to a same-sex wedding;

36% feel uncomfortable when they see same-sex couples holding hands;

20% of all the people who approve of marriage or civil unions of gays would, nonetheless, not attend the ceremonies.

Before the Gallup poll came out, a survey conducted by the Public Religion Institute showed that 51 percent of respondents thought that sex between two men or two women was wrong.

Recently, Frank Bruni of *The New York Times* wrote an article on how gay people and their behavior are sometimes unsettling to straight people. As a gay man and experiencing how many people feel, he also acknowledges, for example, his own unease with simply walking down the street and holding hands with his male partner. He also conveys some trepidation as he reports on certain politicians who describe gay people in the following manner: needing much prayer against the threatening outrage of gay marriage; connecting bestiality and homosexuality in the same breath; or, connecting homosexuality with incest. Imagine the feelings of a gay or lesbian person as they hear these punch lines and others tossed at them. Imagine, too, their reactions as audiences roar their agreement with those harsh words.

Although attitudes toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender have changed somewhat, hatred and fear still manifests itself in bullying gay or transgender teens, closing the doors of schools to children of gay couples, discriminating in employment, and beating or killing persons who are seen as 'different.'

Federal legislation was passed by the Senate in 2013 protecting gay people from employment discrimination, but it failed to pass in the House. There is little hope for legislation in the near future. The most which can be hoped for is that persons who identify themselves as straight can look into their hearts and search for what is blocking them from seeing anyone holding hands in public as just acting tenderly.