

Lisa Sharon Harper and Russell Moore among those exposing rifts among evangelicals

by [Emily McFarlan Miller](#) in the [December 21, 2016](#) issue

The day after the election, Lisa Sharon Harper nearly gave up the name “evangelical.”

Harper, chief church engagement officer at Sojourners, a progressive Christian organization, “felt betrayed” by the 81 percent of white evangelical Christians who voted for Donald Trump for president. Their vote was essential to the victory of a candidate she described as “representing all of the things Jesus stood against—lust for money, sex, and power.”

“I don’t believe Jesus would look on this fear that is rising—fear and actual assaults that have risen,” she said, “and say, ‘We just need to agree to disagree and get along again.’”

In the end, Harper decided not to give up on the name *evangelical*, since it is a tradition that also includes William Wilberforce and Sojourner Truth.

She said Trump’s election has helped her see where things have gone wrong, and where she needed to hear the “very real cry from white America, particularly rural white America.”

The same sentiment has been echoed by a number of prominent evangelicals in the wake of the 2016 presidential election.

History professor John Fea; authors Preston Yancey, D.L. Mayfield, and Skye Jethani; and author-activist Shane Claiborne all have distanced themselves from, if not abandoned, the label *evangelical*. While still identifying as evangelical, former *Christianity Today* editor Katelyn Beaty wrote she “can’t defend my people. I barely recognize them.”

Fuller Theological Seminary [issued a statement, signed by president Mark Labberton and president emeritus Richard Mouw](#):

To whatever degree and in whatever ways Fuller Theological Seminary has contributed or currently contributes to the shame and abuse now associated with the word *evangelical*, we call ourselves, our board of trustees, our faculty, our staff, our students, our alumni, and our friends to repentance and transformation.

Others have called for healing and reconciliation as the election cycle exposed major rifts within evangelicalism.

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, said the campaign reminded him of the Vietnam War in the way it divided families.

He said the evangelical leaders who “repurposed the gospel itself in order to defend a political candidate” reveal a problem bigger than a political election.

Moore makes a distinction even among those who voted for Trump: there were “reluctant Trumpers,” who regarded the candidate as the lesser of two evils, believing he was likely to appoint a Supreme Court justice who was against abortion.

Then there were “the people who have actively sought to normalize” Trump as the candidate of choice.

“For me, I think the bigger issue is with the political activist religious right establishment that in many cases actually waved away major moral problems,” he said, citing the *Access Hollywood* tape, in which the now president-elect talked about grabbing women by their genitals and forcibly kissing them.

Moore argues that it’s up to a new generation of evangelicals not to disengage from politics, but rather to create new coalitions that preserve the “best of religious conservatism.” —Religion News Service

A version of this article, which was edited on December 7, appears in the December 21 print edition under Harper and Moore's names on the People page.