

I'm relieved by the Alabama Senate election results. But it hardly feels like a moral victory.

Nearly half of everyone who went to the state's polls voted for Roy Moore—and most of them are Christians. Can I be reconciled with them?

By [John W. Vest](#)

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Doug Jones and his wife, Louise, on December 12, 2017, at a U.S. Senate race watch-party in Birmingham, Alabama. AP Photo/John Bazemore.

Last night and this morning, news headlines and talking points were all focused on Doug Jones' victory over Roy Moore in Alabama's special election to fill the Senate seat previously held by Jeff Sessions. Words like *upset*, *shocking*, and *unlikely* are being used to describe Alabama's election of a Democratic senator for the first time in 27 years. Commentators are talking as if Moore's loss is a resounding repudiation of President Trump and his agenda.

But as [graphics from CNN demonstrate](#), this election was anything but resounding. Jones defeated a credibly accused sexual predator by the slimmest of margins. Despite allegations of child molestation—not to mention a long list of otherwise controversial and extreme positions—nearly half of everyone who voted in Alabama yesterday voted for Roy Moore. The county map above highlights the all-too-familiar divide between urban, suburban, and rural communities. [CNN's exit polls](#) also reveal significant divisions across categories such as age, race, education, religion, party affiliation, and ideology.

Only in the cynical, winner-takes-all calculus of realpolitik is this election a cause for celebration. Though I am certainly relieved that Moore lost, this hardly feels like a moral victory. I just can't get that excited about an election that could have easily gone the other way. And I can't look past the 650,000 people—most of whom profess to be followers of Jesus—who chose a political agenda over human decency, not to mention the gospel.

Last week I wrote some [harsh words](#) about Christians who support Moore. The majority of my social media network cheered me on and shared my post. One friend pointed out that I used the same kind of black-and-white exclusionary language that has been used for decades against progressive Christians like me, rightly wondering if turning the rhetorical tables will get us anywhere productive.

My friend's comment evokes the tension many of us face these days. I continually find myself torn between a sincere desire to be conciliatory—which is a core commitment of [the Joyful Feast](#), a new worshiping community I've been working hard to incubate—and indignation at the perversion of the gospel, especially when it imperils the common good.

As I struggle to reconcile this polarity within my own spirit, I remain convinced that sitting down together around common tables will move us closer to *shalom* than will blog posts, sermons, social media, or cable news. Somehow, in the holiness of that

shared space, we will find the grace to love each other, speak truth, and work together.

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