

Tim Carson's response to "[The cruelty is the point: behind Florida's veto of an entire class of UMC Clergy](#)" by Jeremy Smith. (June 2022)

Dear Jeremy - Thank you for this completely predictable and lazy knee-jerk reaction to a complicated and heart breaking situation. You could have saved a lot of space by just saying in all circumstances traditionalist are evil and progressives are good no matter what.

It's interesting you failed to mention that if the BOM had acted with a even a modicum of integrity toward their responsibilities this situation would never have happened. Or that the strategy to force a vote on the whole class and block any effort to vote individually was clearly orchestrated by the progressive leadership of the FI Conference. That included real time texts letting progressive supporters know how they should vote and the rejection of at least 3 motions/pleas, all by those cruel traditionalists to vote individually so that the possibility of voting out the whole class could be avoided.

You wrote your article from Seattle. I am an Elder in the Florida Conference and was at the clergy session. For the record I have served 25 of my 27 years as an elder in ministries connected with BOM. I have served on and chaired two DCOM's. I served 12 years on BOM and all 12 of those years as a member of the BOM Executive Committee. My last quadrennium I was the Vice Chair of BOM. I served 8 years on the Conference Relations Committee. I was a part of the original RIM design team, spent 14 years on that team and it was my privilege to serve the last 8 of those years as the Chair of the RIM leadership team. In my years of service to BOM I have celebrated and wept with many, been on the receiving end of candidates joy and hugs as well as their anger and frustration. I was told that God was abandoning the Methodist Church because of me. I was cussed out by an absolutely irate spouse of a candidate who got continued, and had another candidate throw up on my shoes.

In all of my years associated with FL BOM they have always held in tension their responsibility to the candidates and the church. Up until what happened with the Executive Committee and Jay Therrell last year I would have told you our Conference has enjoyed a very healthy trust in the fairness and integrity of the work of BOM. Until this year, I would have sworn on a Bible that I never knew of an instance where BOM chose to use a candidate, even with that candidates consent, to make a theological, social, or political statement.

And then this year a candidate was approved for Commissioning who on the night of her approval posted a video where she stated that she was a self avowed practicing homosexual. (her exact words) At the time of her approval that information was known by some members of BOM and withheld from others. That is not speculation. It was stated during a speech in clergy session by a member of BOM that he knew her orientation and voted to approve her regardless. When the information on this candidate became more widely known there apparently were multiple conversations with the Bishop from other members of BOM which the Bishop openly referred to during clergy session, to try to come up with an appropriate strategy to prevent what eventually happened. As I already stated the progressive leadership came with a clear strategy to force the clergy session to vote on the commissioned candidates

in a block. Have you ask yourself why that strategy would be so important to the progressive leadership? It's true that we have always voted on candidates as a block. But to my knowledge we have never had a situation in the past where BOM was presenting candidates in open defiance of the BOD.

After the first vote failed a motion was put forward to reconsider and another motion was added to be able to vote individually during the reconsideration. Even knowing that the vote had failed once and the whole class hung in the balance the motion to vote individually was disallowed by the Bishop. The second vote failed by a margin of 72% to 28%.

Nobody won. Nobody wanted the outcome we got. Nobody that I saw celebrated. We should never have been in the situation and the outcome never ever should have happened. A great deal of avoidable harm was inflicted and innocent people suffered as collateral damage. God was anything but glorified and years of long and hard earned trust was destroyed on a single day. I heard the question raised: If BOM is now willing to use progressive candidates to make theological statements will they be willing to also use traditionalist candidates to make different statements? Trust will be difficult to rebuild.

My experience after the session was considerably different than the person who reported above. I witnessed no demonic glee. While I have no doubt there was some gallows laughter and joking to break the tension at the end of an incredibly long and tense session, most of what I witnessed was a mixture of "what the hell just happened" disbelief, open grief, tears, and a pervading heaviness. It is true that a lot of people got out as soon as they could. There was no laughter that I heard, no celebrations of victory, no we showed them. Personally it took at least 2 hours and a deep conversation with 2 trusted friends over lunch for the muscles in my chest to stop physically shaking. That night I had to shed a few tears before I could get my body to relax enough to sleep. I know that I am not alone in my physical reactions.

Having said all of that let me end where I began. For you to suggest that the actions of traditionalist at the FI Conference clergy session was motivated by cruelty for cruelty's sake and that is was all somehow about gatekeeping and harming LGBTQIA people is predictable and lazy. I can tell you that many who voted against the slate were deeply conflicted to be forced to handle a situation they should never have been put in. Perhaps feeling the weight of vows is something that clergy in the Pacific Northwest Conference have evolved past, but it is still an issue for some of us backward Florida folks. It is also inconvenient for your argument that I know of at least several clergy who are in favor of full inclusion and yet voted against the class based on their commitment to keep their vows to uphold the Discipline. I will look forward to your predictable post of outrage that brands them as not real progressives, traitors to the cause or whatever fits your narrative.

Or maybe, just maybe, I could express a moment of my own outrage and pain after reading your article and ask that you consider leaving complicated commentary on situations you don't know anything about to the grown ups.