**Maine Council of Churches**

**A COVENANT FOR CIVIL DISCOURSE**

**PREAMBLE**

A flourishing democracy requires rigorous public debate that includes freedom of expression for all points of view. For such debate to serve the ends of democracy and the common good it must be rooted in an environment of mutual respect and honesty. It seems, however, that communications around political campaigns and issues have become meaner, more deceitful and more disrespectful, causing confusion, division and discord among the electorate.

Most faith traditions urge every person to treat other people as they would want to be treated, making no exceptions for behavior in public debate. The faith tradition shared by members of the Maine Council of Churches is to "speak the truth in love.” To that end, we have adopted the following Covenant for Civil Discourse as a guide for participation in public life.

We encourage and invite our member denominations and other faith communities to join us in this Covenant and to encourage their own local faith communities and individual members to do so as well, particularly those individual members of their traditions and local faith communities who are also public servants or candidates for public office and those who volunteer or work for campaigns.

By signing and publicly endorsing this Covenant for Civil Discourse we serve the people of Maine, our democracy and the larger goals of building a society of justice, sustainability, compassion and peace.

**COVENANT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (name of individual and description of public position or name of faith community, campaign or other organization) hereby commit:

1. To act respectfully toward others, including those who oppose me/us in public debate, and to attempt to understand others' point(s) of view. I extend this attitude of respect to all those engaged in civil discourse in the United States.

2. To refrain from personal attacks, while maintaining the right to vigorously disagree.

3. To refrain from making statements which characterize my/our opponents as evil.

4. To refuse to make untrue statements in defense of my/our position.

5. To value honesty, truth, and civility while striving to find workable solutions.

6. To expect any person, party, campaign or organization working on my/our behalf, or to whom I/we contribute money, to meet these same standards for civil discourse, and to disavow statements that violate these standards.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If signing for a faith community, campaign or other organization, please tell us the office or position of person signing on its behalf:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Please print legibly:*

Name of Person Signing: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organization (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to:**

**Maine Council of Churches, 156 High Street, Portland, ME 04101**

By signing and returning to MCC, you give us permission to publish your name or the name of the signing faith community, campaign or other organization in any public communications about the Covenant, including our website, press releases and other public statements.