

# 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 ask all candidates for state and national level public office in Maine to sign and publicly endorse this Covenant for Civil Discourse as a means of serving 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 title of position running for) hereby commit:

1. To act respectfully toward others, including those who oppose me 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 opponents as evil.
4. To refuse to make untrue statements in defense of my 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 behalf to meet these same standards for civil discourse, and to disavow statements that violate these standards.