

20 through the development of ecumenical regional Just Peace centers, in partnership with other
21 denominations; and

22 WHEREAS, The Maine Conference participates in and supports the just peace initiatives of the
23 Maine Council of Churches; now, therefore, be it

24 RESOLVED, that the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Maine Conference sign the Covenant for
25 Civil Discourse of the Maine Council of Churches and encourage all Commissions, Committees,
26 and organizations of the Maine Conference to do likewise and to abide by its recommendations.”

27 The full text of the Covenant for Civil Discourse follows:

28 December 18, 2009 COVENANT FOR CIVIL DISCOURSE PREAMBLE

29 We, the Board of the Maine Council of Churches, believe a flourishing democracy requires
30 rigorous public debate that includes freedom of expression for all points of view. For such
31 debate to serve the ends of democracy and the common good, we believe it must be rooted in
32 an environment of mutual respect and honesty. It seems, however, that Americans'
33 communications around political campaigns and issues have become meaner, more deceitful
34 and more disrespectful. This trend has increased partisanship and helped to create confusion,
35 division and discord among the electorate. There is a growing tendency toward violence and
36 civil disruption.

37 Most faith traditions urge every person to treat other people as they would want to be treated,
38 making no exceptions for behavior in public debate. The faith tradition shared by Maine Council
39 of Churches' members teaches that we seek to "speak the truth in love" and, rooted in these

40 ideals, we want to reverse this unhealthy trend in American society, starting locally here in
41 Maine. To that end, we have adopted the following Covenant of Civil Discourse with one
42 another and have agreed to hold one another accountable to these principles.

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

48 Further, we encourage and invite all Maine public servants, elected officials and candidates for
49 public office to sign the voluntary Maine Code of Fair Campaign Practices (21-A M.R.S.A. Para.
50 1101(2)) and we ask representatives of issue-based campaigns in Maine at every level to join
51 publicly in this Covenant for Civil Discourse, as a means to serving the people of Maine, our
52 democracy and the larger goals of building a society of justice, compassion, and peace, and
53 environmental sustainability.

54 COVENANT

55 I/We, _____ (name of individual and description of
56 public position, if any, or name of group and description of campaign or name of faith
57 community), agree:

- 58 1. To act respectfully toward others, including those who oppose me/us in public debate, and
59 to attempt to understand others' point(s) of view. I/we would extend this attitude of respect
60 to all those engaged in civil discourse in America.
- 61 2. To refrain from personal attacks, while maintaining the right to vigorously disagree.
- 62 3. To refrain from statements which characterize my/our opponents as evil.
- 63 4. To refuse to make untrue statements in defense of my/our position.
- 64 5. To value honesty, truth, and civility while striving to find workable solutions.
- 65 6. To expect that any person, party, campaign or corporation working on my/our behalf or to
66 whom I/we contribute time or money in support, shall follow these same covenantal
67 statements.

68 Signed: Name of Organization (if applicable)

69 Date:

Submitted by,

The Witness Life Commission
Stephen Hastings, Chair
March 30, 2010