



"SEEKING COMMON GROUND,
WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD"

As the 124th Maine Legislature begins its work, we at the Maine Council of Churches, representing nine Roman Catholic, Protestant and Unitarian Universalist denominations in our state, want to express our appreciation for your public service as a representative of the people of Maine and a steward of the common good. We recognize that this new legislative season will present significant challenges -- economic, political and moral.

We pray that your time of service in the Legislature will move us, together, toward the vision many of us share -- whatever our faith -- of a community in which love of neighbor is not just a nice concept, but a way of living together that we're committed to in hard times as well as good.

As you take up this vital work, we ask you to keep before you certain principles in your deliberations on behalf of Maine people:

- That we are all in this together. We believe that the best measure of Maine's strength, morally, socially and economically, is the way we treat the most vulnerable among us.
- That the purpose of human life is much greater than individual survival and success. In our freedom, each of us, and all of us together, is called to do our part to sustain the whole interdependent web of human community and of God's creation. We are here to share one another's burdens as well as the benefits of our common life.
- That the great challenge of our time is to learn how to create a sustainable society. Sustainability means not only good stewardship of our natural resources and fragile ecosystems, but finding ways to repair the outages in our prosperity grid that prevent true opportunity for all. In periods of great change, such as now, we must ensure that the costs of adapting to new economic and environmental circumstances are shared equally and fairly among us all.
- That as citizens of Maine, we who are religious leaders and members of faith communities are called to speak up in the public square, as voices for the voiceless and advocates for the vision of a better society so well expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures: "You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairers of the breach; the restorer of the streets to live in." (Isaiah 58:12).

We at the Council wish to be a resource to you and a source of truth-telling that is perhaps different from that of other voices you will hear. In the months ahead, the Council will speak out publicly, as we have always done, on issues of social justice and sustainability, including environmental protections; food, housing and energy security; access to quality, affordable health care for all; improving the State's relationship with Maine's Wabanaki tribes; and progressive tax policies to support the just, compassionate and sustainable society all of us would like to live in and leave as a legacy for the next generation.

Whatever your own religious beliefs may or may not be -- and whatever your political convictions and positions -- we trust that as a public servant and leader, you share our aspiration that, together, we *can* find solutions to the challenges that face us now.