

## ***Faith Demands Civility***

**SOUTH DAKOTA FAITH IN PUBLIC LIFE** is a group of religious leaders from a variety of different religious traditions who study controversial social and political issues together. Our views are not based on partisan politics but rather on moral values as we search for common ground.

Even when we disagree, we practice respectful discussion. Our faiths all call us to respect every person, no matter how much we disagree with them, because every person is made in the image of God and is loved by God. **Faith demands civility.**

### **A Call to Restore Civility**

Civility is necessary in a healthy democracy. But we are witnessing a dramatic loss of civility in public life. This is incompatible with our moral values as religious leaders and our democratic values as citizens.

We feel compelled to issue this call to citizens and candidates to return to civility, decency and fairness in political discourse. Here's what that means:

- Civility, decency and fairness do not allow for the demonization of an opposing candidate or the dangerous scapegoating of entire groups of people.
- It does not allow language that mocks, insults and demeans others.
- It does not allow the shouting of slogans of hatred and contempt for the opposing candidate.
- It does not rely on bullying or treating the weak with contempt.
- Most of all, civility does not encourage violence or make not-so-subtle hints of violent reprisals against political opponents. This is unconscionable in a nation that embodies the peaceful transfer of power.

### **Protecting Our Nation, Affirming Our Values**

Americans have legitimate fears about low wages, racism, violence, terrorism and other threats to well-being. But especially in difficult times we urge you to remember the ideals upon which our nation is founded and the ideals of your faith:

- People of faith are called to work for justice and peace for *everyone*, so we urge you to reject divisive tactics that exploit fear for political gain.
- We urge you to demand honesty and civility from candidates. How we treat one another is just as much a reflection of our faith as how we vote.
- We urge you to seek candidates who do not violate your moral intuitions about basic fairness, the appropriate use of power and the dignity of the office they seek.