**A COVENANT FOR CIVILITY:**

**Come Let Us Reason Together**

*How good and pleasant it is when the people of God live together in unity.—Psalm 133:1*

As Christian pastors and leaders with diverse theological and political beliefs, we have come together to make this covenant with each other, and to commend it to the church, faith-based organizations, and individuals, so that together we can contribute to a more civil national discourse. The church in the United States can offer a message of hope and reconciliation to a nation that is deeply divided by political and cultural differences. Too often, however, we have reflected the political divisions of our culture rather than the unity we have in the body of Christ. We come together to urge those who claim the name of Christ to “ put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

1) We commit that our dialogue with each other will reflect the spirit of the Scriptures, where our posture toward each other is to be “quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19).

2) We believe that each of us, and our fellow human beings, are created in the image of God. The respect we owe to God should be reflected in the honor and respect we show to each other in our common humanity, particularly in how we speak to each other. ***“***With the tongue we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God …. this ought not to be so” (James 3:9, 10).

3) We pledge that when we disagree, we will do so respectfully, without falsely impugning the other’s motives, attacking the other’s character, or questioning the other’s faith, and recognizing in humility that in our limited, human opinions, “we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror” (1 Corinthians 13:12). We will therefore “be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).

4) We will ever be mindful of the language we use in expressing our disagreements, being neither arrogant nor boastful in our beliefs: “Before destruction one’s heart is haughty, but humility goes before honor” (Proverbs 18:12).

5) We recognize that we cannot function together as citizens of the same community, whether local or national, unless we are mindful of how we treat each other in pursuit of the common good in the common life we share together. Each of us must therefore “put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (Ephesians 4:25).

6) We commit to pray for our political leaders—those with whom we may agree, as well as those with whom we may disagree. “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made … for kings and all who are in high positions” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

7) We believe that it is more difficult to hate others, even our adversaries and our enemies, when we are praying for them. We commit to pray for each other, those with whom we agree and those with whom we may disagree, so that together we may strive to be faithful witnesses to our Lord, who prayed “ that they may be one” (John 17:22).

We pledge to God and to each other that we will lead by example in a country where civil discourse seems to have broken down. We will work to model a better way in how we treat each other in our many faith communities, even across religious and political lines. We will strive to create in our congregations safe and sacred spaces for common prayer and community discussion as we come together to seek God’s will for our nation and our world.

<http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=action.display&item=100308-civility-covenant>