

*Seeking common ground, working for the  
common good*

November 20, 2015

Governor Paul LePage  
Office of the Governor  
#1 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0001

Dear Governor LePage,

The Maine Council of Churches strongly decries your pronouncement earlier this week that you would “adamantly oppose any attempt by the federal government to place Syrian refugees in Maine.”

The Council, which represents nine denominations and more than 600 churches across the state, recognizes that in the wake of events this week in Paris and Beirut it is easy to let fear begin to dictate our words and actions. However, we cannot allow fear to become so powerful that it clouds our judgment and hardens our hearts against innocent, frightened people fleeing in terror from the very same violence we fear. When Americans have allowed that to happen in the past—turning away boatloads of Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust or incarcerating Japanese Americans in internment camps, for example—we have always come to regret it.

The wisdom and challenge found in our faith traditions’ sacred texts demand that people of faith have the courage to proclaim “there is no fear in love and perfect love casts out fear.”

We agree that it is imperative that the United States continue to enforce its already stringent procedures to carefully screen refugees before they are ever allowed to enter our borders. However, we must not compound the tragedy of this week’s attacks by making refugees and Muslims the target of violent rhetoric in a backlash of hatred.

The President of France, Francois Hollande, announced yesterday that the attacks in Paris will not prevent his country from keeping their commitment to welcome 30,000 Syrian refugees in coming months. If he can have the moral courage to let love cast out fear, surely you and the people of Maine can do the same.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors of the Maine Council of Churches

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