



*COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA*  
*Office of the Governor*

Timothy M. Kaine  
Governor

April 29, 2009

Dear Friends:

I proclaimed January 16<sup>th</sup> of this year as Religious Freedom Day and I want to commend the Center for Interfaith Reconciliation on its efforts across the state to create local understanding and civic cooperation of different faiths. I commend the signatories of "A Common Word", the open letter between leading members of the Muslim faith and leading members of the Christian faith, in furthering this effort.

As Virginians, we have a strong history of recognizing the common ground between different faiths. On January 16, 1786, our Commonwealth became the first state to codify this recognition in the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, proclaiming to the world that all people are entitled to the free exercise of religion. At that moment, Virginia dedicated itself to the proposition that our society would not be defined by our differences, but rather strengthened by our commonalities.

I recently traveled to the Middle East to meet with business and government leaders regarding the growing economic relationships between the Commonwealth and other nations. I met with leaders in Israel, Dubai and Morocco, and during a free moment I was privileged to walk past the ancient walls into Old Jerusalem. There, surrounded by the Temple Mount of Judaism, the Noble Sanctuary of Islam and the Church of the Sepulchre of Christianity, I stood in one of the most sacred and revered spots in the world. I realized that each of these faiths celebrate a sense of transcendence, a sense that we are called by a higher power to transform our world for the better. It is my hope that this call to service unites all people, regardless of creed, to bring peace and prosperity to the world that we will hand to our children.

My best wishes to the Center for Interfaith Reconciliation and to each and every person joining this effort to promote union and understanding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "TKaine", written in a cursive style.

Timothy M. Kaine