

**Environmental Roundtable with Gov. Paul LePage**  
**January 20, 2011**  
**Remarks by the Rev. Martha Kirkpatrick**

Thank you, Governor, for taking the time to be with all of us today. Thank you for listening to all that has been offered in the last hour and a half. In my own life, and often I think, in public discourse, we sometimes forget the one thing, which is where I will start and end. Which is gratitude. It is our task, I think, all of ours, to remember all there is to be grateful for. Listening to the stories of the people here today, and there are thousands of stories, I am so profoundly grateful for all that we have been given, for the place we are lucky enough to live, for the people who share it with us, who have cared enough over the years to make this a place where human lives and the natural world can flourish.

This place, in which we have been so fortunate to have been set down, this place is a blessing. A place of astonishing beauty, abundant provision from the land and the sea, strong communities where people care for each other, a place where people want to raise their children. I was born here, and grew up here, and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

It is a gift, this place. We know, those of us that live here, that the living isn't always easy. In fact, it almost never is, except maybe for a week in August. It isn't, for most of us, a place for easy living. But it can be, and should be, a place of good living. Values and ethics are strong here, and they include being responsible, caring for each other and our homes and neighborhoods, planning ahead for our children's future, sharing with others. We know, because we're practical that way, that we are intimately bound up in the web of life, that we live in a system where everything and everyone is connected. Unlike many places, we still understand that we are dependent on the earth for our livelihood, for every aspect of health and wellbeing, physical, financial, moral, spiritual.

We have other gifts, beyond the beauty and abundance of this land. We have gifts of being resilient, resourceful and pragmatic. We weather storms. We don't waste things. We know we're dependent on each other and take care of each other. Our communities are places where relationships matter and we value responsibility and good citizenship. We make relationships and personal credibility a priority. We are small enough to try things on a human scale, and adapt and adjust them as needed. We work better with real problems than with abstractions. And we have entrepreneurs, many of whom you've heard from today, who have been leaders in sustainability beyond our borders, who are inventively finding new ways to make things and do things that use nature as a model, exciting new ways that are good for the long haul and that position us for the future.

Our connection to this good earth is deeper than we know. It is our home, it is in our blood. It is a gift we are called to celebrate, to be profoundly grateful for. This blessing, as all blessings do, comes with responsibilities, to care for it, to tend it and to keep it. With gratitude for all that is and all we have been given, we are also called to operate from a place of hope. Not some breezy optimism that obscures the real problems,

environmental, social, or economic. I'm talking about the kind of hope that opens our eyes to the blessings and gifts we have been given, the talents and resources we have, and emboldens us to envision a future where all life flourishes, where community and individual needs balance and support each other, where we work toward a common vision that celebrates and honors the goodness of creation and where we put our heads together to find sustainable ways to live and work. Clean air to breathe, clean water; forests and farms, lakes and oceans that support and sustain all life that depend on them; healthy places to live and work, and play, places that inspire artists and excite our creativity and imagination and give rest to our souls; healthy children who look to the future with hope and aspiration; vital communities where people look out for each other and celebrate life. We can and should have this vision for ourselves and our children. There is no good reason to sell ourselves short. There is no reason to settle for anything less, or expect anything less. More than a vision, this is our moral imperative, to love and care for what we have been given.

This is our place, our home. This is our time, to live with full and grateful hearts, into what we have been given, and to inspire hope for our future. May it be so.

Thank you.