



TOUCHSTONES

Small Group Discussion Guide

Nonviolence & Repairing the World

Before You Gather

Read the following pieces prior to gathering.

1. *The Power of Nonviolence, Part 1*

by Karuna Mantena

...Gandhi recognized very clearly the limits of rational debate in politics. He thought that people grew emotionally and psychologically attached to their beliefs as aspects of identity and ego.

...Suffering in Gandhi's conception of it was less concerned with physical distress per se and something more along the lines of self-discipline in action. Indeed, 'self-suffering' was Gandhi's translation of the Sanskrit term *tapas* or *tapasya*, which more readily signals practices of ascetic self-mastery.

Gandhi's Salt March (or Salt Satyagraha) of 1930 and King's 1963 Birmingham campaign are two of the most celebrated events in the history of nonviolence.

...What mattered most for Gandhi and King was less the suffering inflicted than the discipline protestors displayed in the face of provocation and assault. ...How does this *tapasya* work to persuade recalcitrant opponents? How can it, in Gandhi's words, "open an opponent's ears" or "pierce their hearts?" The theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, another important early interpreter of Gandhi, offered one of the most insightful accounts of the positive political effects of nonviolent suffering. ...King's understanding of nonviolence drew upon Niebuhr's appraisal of Gandhi in his seminal early work, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932). What made Niebuhr such a canny analyst of nonviolence was that he, like Gandhi, saw politics to be riven by irrational sentiments, drives and passions.

...Niebuhr saw that nonviolent-protests, like all protests, involve coercion, intimidation and disruption.

Successful movements try to mitigate these negative consequences through the style and

structure of nonviolent protest enacted. By 'enduring more suffering than it causes' (in Niebuhr's words) nonviolence demonstrates goodwill towards the opposition. Its discipline displays a moral purpose beyond resentment and selfish ambition. Together, goodwill and the repression of personal resentment temper the passionate resistance of opponents.

Source: <https://aeon.co/essays/nonviolence-has-returned-from-obscurity-to-become-a-new-force>

2. *The Power of Nonviolence, Part 2*

by Karuna Mantena

No political action seems to enjoy greater moral authority than the nonviolent methods ...Gandhi inaugurated.... *Satyagraha*, which roughly translates to "holding fast to truth" ...never caught on ...[but] nonviolent models of organizing protest did.

...Gandhi and King's nonviolence required the repression of resentment and anger to garner the right political effect. Neither of them denied anger was a justified response to the experience of oppression, but they saw that it would not be, in [theologian Reinhold] Niebuhr's terms, "morally and politically wise" to make resentment the face of political action. Resentment, anger and indignation arouse opponents' egoism and hostility, and tend to alienate bystanders. This was why, for Niebuhr, "the more the egoistic element can be purged from resentment, the purer a vehicle of justice it becomes."

The history of nonviolent politics has revealed and confirmed the transformative power of coordinated mass action. It has also shown that force alone can neither induce popular consent nor reliably secure political victory.

...Ironically, nonviolent politics can actually face more hurdles in democracies. Authoritarian legitimacy has proved to be a brittle façade, easily exposed as such by nonviolent tactics of disruption

and provocation. Democratic publics, however, are surprisingly hostile to these same kinds of tactics.

...Democratic politics are driven by the dynamics of passion and power. The open and continual contestation for power fuels resentments, antagonism and polarization. Nonviolent suffering offers subtle and proven ways to overcome these tendencies and navigate the hard but necessary road of political persuasion. Retrieving this lost element at the core of 20th-century nonviolence is key to sustaining and shaping nonviolent politics for the 21st century.

Source: <https://aeon.co/essays/nonviolence-has-returned-from-obscurity-to-become-a-new-force>

3. *The Nonviolent Struggle for Justice*

by John Dear

It dawned on me ...how very differently Jesus lived—how he practiced perfect selfless love and embodied divine, creative nonviolence; how he disobeyed the customs and ordinances of institutionalized injustice and imperialism; how he forgave those who killed him and, even as he died, trusted that he would live on in ...[a] loving realm of peace. ...Inspiration swept over me. I acknowledged my own longing to engage in creative nonviolence and to advocate it publicly.

...[That] would put me in a lonesome spot. Just as I had encountered the towering wall of St. Peter's Basilica, I would have to stand against the Church's bulwark on matters of war, namely, its entrenched and sacrosanct Just War Theory. Moreover, to stand publicly against injustice would put me at risk of harassment, rejection, and imprisonment. But in the contest between hesitation and longing, my longing won out.

[At a] ...retreat, a quote from Cesar Chavez, the United Farm Workers union organizer, appeared on the bulletin board. "The truest act of courage, the strongest act of being human, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice. To be human," he said at the end of his great fast in 1968, "is to suffer for others." This statement cut to the heart of things. His simple words moved me deeply, and they summed up what I was learning. ...I, too, wanted to spend my life in selfless service, to take part in the nonviolent struggle for justice.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/18302>

4. *Spiritual Revolutionary for Nonviolence*

by Noah Levine

Serving the truth comes down simply to living life from the place of positive intentions. ...It means rigorous honesty to self and others. It means doing the right thing even when everything and everyone in society is telling you to ignore, suppress, or abandon the path of nonviolence, understanding, and care.

The truth is that violence is never the answer. There is no winner in violent conflict, only harm caused to both sides. The spiritual revolutionary practices nonviolence.

The truth is that selfishness and greed never lead to happiness or contentment. Greed feeds discontent. The spiritual revolutionary practices generosity and service in the face of self-centeredness.

The truth is that ignoring or denying the oppression and confusion in the world is part of the problem. If we're not part of the solution, we are the problem. The spiritual revolutionary is engaged with the world and responds to oppression.... At times this response comes in the form of education; at other times, in the form of hands-on nonviolent action.

...We have the ability to let go, to let be, and to respond with care and understanding to what is happening in each moment.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/17260>

5. *Nonviolence Manifesto* by Thích Nhất Hạnh

I pledge in my daily life, in my family, my work, my community, my country, and my region, to:

- 1) Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice.
- 2) Practice active nonviolence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economic, and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents.
- 3) Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice, and political and economic oppression.
- 4) Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening without engaging in fanaticism, defamation, and the rejection of others.

5) Promote consumer behavior that is responsible and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet.
6) Contribute to the development of my community, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/23665>

6. *The Tragic Gap* by Parker Palmer

The bad news is that violence is found at every level of our lives. The good news is that we can choose nonviolence at every level as well. But what does it mean, in specifics, to act nonviolently? ...A thousand situations might yield a thousand answers. Yet running through all of these answers we will find a single “habit of the heart:” to be in the world nonviolently means learning to hold the tension of opposites, trusting that the tension itself will pull our hearts and minds open to a third way of thinking and acting.

In particular, we must learn to hold the tension between the reality of the moment and the possibility that something better might emerge. ...In a post-September 11 world, I mean the tension between the fact that we are engaged in the endless cycle of war and the possibility that we might someday live in a world at peace.

Of course, finding a third way beyond our current dilemma may be possible in theory, but it often seems unlikely in life. ...In a world at war, peace may be our dream, but the grim realities of greed, fear, hatred, and doomsday weaponry quickly turn that dream into a delusion.

The insight at the heart of nonviolence is that we live in a tragic gap—a gap between the way things are and the way we know they might be. It is a gap that never has been and never will be closed. If we want to live nonviolent lives, we must learn to stand in the tragic gap, faithfully holding the tension between reality and possibility.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=776>

Gathering

Business: Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

Opening Words: *We Come* by Rev. Heather Janules

We come ...called by war, by the suffering we inflict and endure, when minds across borders fail to reason and compromise.

We come ...called by loss, by the deaths of those who serve in our name, those whose lives end before their natural course in service to a cause greater than their own.

We come ...called by hope; hope that we will, in some season, finally surrender our swords for ploughshares.

And we come ...called by peace. May we hear its song, may we proclaim its promise.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/called-loss-called-peace>

Chalice Lighting: *Let there be light!*

by Rev. Gordon McKeeman

“Let there be light!” Let it shine in dark places, in moments of pain, in times of grief, in the darkness of hatred, violence, oppression, where there is discouragement and despair. Wherever darkness is to be put to flight, “Let there be light!”

Source: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/let-there-be-light>

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Read the Wisdom Story: Invite someone to read aloud the following:

The Coconut Monk by Thích Nhất Hạnh

The Coconut Monk lived in a time when Vietnam was at war. All the fighting made him very sad.

One day, he went out walking. While he walked, he collected bits of metal, pieces of bombs, and bullets that littered the land. He melted all the pieces together and turned them into a beautiful bell.

He told the pieces of metal, “You have been playing the game of war. Now you can help create peace.”

Every night, before going to sleep, he would strike the bell. Its music echoed out into the night sky.

Source:

<https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/15871>

Buddha Threatened by Death

by Anthony de Mello

Buddha was once threatened with death by a bandit called Angulimal.

“Then be good enough to fulfill my dying wish,” said Buddha. “Cut off the branch of that tree.”

One slash of the sword, and it was done! “What now?” asked the bandit.

“Put it back again,” said Buddha.

The bandit laughed. “You must be crazy to think that anyone can do that.”

“On the contrary, it is you who are crazy to think that you are mighty because you can wound and destroy. That is the task of children. The mighty know how to create and heal.”

Source: <https://spiritualgrowthevents.com/anthony-de-mello-buddha-threatened-by-death-zen-buddhist-spiritual-story/>

Readings from the Common Bowl: Invite group members to read the following selections aloud. Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

“There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.” *Thomas Merton*

“Dr. King’s policy was that nonviolence would achieve the gains for black people in the United

States. His major assumption was that if you are nonviolent, if you suffer, your opponent will see your suffering and will be moved to change his heart. That’s very good. He only made one fallacious assumption: In order for nonviolence to work, your opponent must have a conscience. The United States has none.”

Stokely Carmichael / aka Kwame Ture

“You have to be taught the way of peace, the way of love, the way of nonviolence. In the religious sense, in the moral sense, you can say that in the bosom of every human being, there is a spark of the divine. So, you don’t have a right as a human to abuse that spark of the divine in your fellow human being. From time to time, we would discuss that, if you have someone attacking you, beating you, spitting on you, you have to think of that person. Years ago, that person was an innocent child, an innocent little baby. What happened? Did something go wrong? Did someone teach that person to hate, to abuse others? You try to appeal to the goodness of every human being and you don’t give up. You never give up on anyone.” *John Lewis*

“Suffering, though, can be nothing more than a sad and sorry thing without the presence on the part of the sufferer ...a graceful heart, an accepting and open heart, a heart that holds no malice toward the inflictors of his or suffering. This is a difficult concept to understand, and it is even more difficult to internalize, but it has everything to do with the way of nonviolence. We are talking about love here.... This is a broader, deeper, more all-encompassing love. It is a love that accepts and embraces the hateful and the hurtful. It is a love that recognizes the spark of the divine in each of us, even in those who would raise their hand against us, those we might call our enemy.” *John Lewis*

“In order to live a life of nonviolence one must be willing to soften—to open one’s heart to others, to forgive, to be compassionate, to be graceful, to be loving toward others and oneself, to be kind. We must be willing, in other words, to reject hardness as the measure of power and justice, and to embrace, instead, so much of what is commonly associated with the feminine. Indeed, it is no longer tenable—if it ever were—to assess and critique nonviolence in terms of whether or not it conforms

to some masculine idea of the justice-seeking self.”
Alycee J. Lane

“Nonviolence, therefore, can be described as an honest and diligent pursuit of truth. It could also mean the search for the meaning of life or the purpose of life, questions that have tormented humankind for centuries. The fact that we have not been able to find satisfactory answers to these questions does not mean there is no answer. It only means we have not searched with any degree of honesty. The search has to be both external and internal. We seek to ignore this crucial search because the sacrifices it demands are revolutionary. It means moving away from greed, selfishness, possessiveness, and dominance to love, compassion, understanding, and respect.” *Arun Gandhi*

“Emotional intelligence is about equipping young people with the kinds of skills they need to both identify and manage their emotions, to communicate those emotions effectively, and to resolve conflict nonviolently. So, it’s a whole set of skills and competencies that, for us, fall under the umbrella of emotional intelligence. *Linda Lantieri*

“Is the way that we communicate violent? If we define violence as causing harm to ourselves and others, then much of the way we communicate with each other may fit this characterization. All human beings have an innate capacity for compassion, but it is easy to become detached from this capacity in our pursuit to get our way. But when we get our way through fear, guilt, shame, or coercion, we are just as likely to suffer as those who give in to our will. Violent communication need not be malevolent; often, [unfortunately] it is automatic and habitual.” *Joshua Schultz*

“We see much too much of the violent ways conflicts are handled, but we almost never see the stories about successful acts of nonviolent conflict resolution led by prominent figures as well as their many followers who apply nonviolence to their everyday lives. There is no sense of balance in the messages we receive about how people handle conflict. Sure, we learn about great nonviolent leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, and Desmond Tutu in textbooks, but we seldom ever

really learn how to apply those acts and beliefs in our own daily lives.”

Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation

“Building peace, or making nonviolence, requires passion—in the double sense of having both a zest for life and justice and a willingness to suffer on behalf of this passion. It also requires compassion not only for victims of violence but also for those who wage war and inflict violence, because war-makers often do not know what they are doing. They believe they are doing what is right and necessary in the service of a higher good—like freedom and democracy (if they are fighters for the United States), or like the strengthening of Islam (if they are fighters for Al Qaeda).” *Carter Heyward*

Reading

7. *Baseball and Nonviolence*

by Stanley Hauerwas

Baseball is America’s greatest gift to civilization. It is a slow game of failure. If you win half the time, that’s considered very good. Not only that, but a game takes nine innings, and the season is very long. During a game it often seems that little is happening. Of course, this is true only for those who don’t understand the game. It takes extended training in patience to be a baseball fan because you must acquire the habits that allow you to see how compelling and beautiful this game of peace is.

...America is a very violent country. That we are so has everything to do with our impatience. But we do have baseball as an alternative to war. ...David James Duncan ...[writes]: “I cherish a theory I once heard propounded by G. Q. Durham that professional baseball is inherently antiwar. The most overlooked cause of war, his theory runs, is that it is so damned interesting. It takes hard effort, skill, love and a little luck to make times of peace consistently interesting. About all it takes to make war interesting is a life. The appeal of trying to kill others without being killed yourself is that it brings suspense, terror, honor, disgrace, rage, tragedy, treachery and occasionally even heroism within range of guys who, in times of peace, might lead lives of unmitigated blandness. But baseball is one activity that is able to generate suspense and excitement on a national scale, just like war. And baseball can only be played in peace.”

...The patience of nonviolence is not an ideal, but rather lies at the heart of the practices and habits that sustain our everyday life. ...Our very bodies were given to us so that we might learn to be patient.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/28465>

Living the Questions: Explore as many of these questions as time and interest allow. Fully explore one question before moving to the next. The questions do not need to be discussed in order.

1. In reading #1, Karuna Mantena writes, “What made Niebuhr such a canny analyst of nonviolence was that he, like Gandhi, saw politics to be riven by irrational sentiments, drives, and passions.” In this assessment of politics, were they correct? Why or why not? If they are correct, what faith, if any, can we place in politics? Both Gandhi and King placed value on the discipline of self-suffering, i.e., *tapasya* for a cause. Mantena then writes, “By ‘enduring more suffering than it causes’ (in Niebuhr’s words) nonviolence demonstrates goodwill towards the opposition.” What is the value of this goodwill? “How can it, in Gandhi’s words, ‘open an opponent’s ears’ or ‘pierce their hearts?’” Was it true in Gandhi’s and King’s eras? Is it true today? Why or why not?
2. In reading #2, Karuna Mantena writes, “Ironically, nonviolent politics can actually face more hurdles in democracies. Authoritarian legitimacy has proved to be a brittle façade, easily exposed as such by nonviolent tactics of disruption and provocation. Democratic publics, however, are surprisingly hostile to these same kinds of tactics.” Does this surprise you? How might this be true? In what ways was the Black Lives Matter movement challenged or even co-opted because of this? Is All Lives Matter an attempt at co-option? Why or why not?
3. In reading #3, John Dear writes about Jesus and Cesar Chavez and their creative nonviolence. Of Jesus, Dear wrote, “...he practiced perfect selfless love, ...he disobeyed the customs and ordinances of institutionalized injustice and imperialism; ...he forgave those who killed him ...even as he died...” Would you include Jesus in the pantheon of exemplary practitioners of

nonviolence like Gandhi and King? Why or why not? Two and one-half years into their strike, younger members of the National Farm Workers Association union headed by Chavez began to talk about turning from nonviolence to violence. In February 1968, in the spirit of Gandhi and to rededicate the union to nonviolence, Chavez went on a water only, 25-day fast, losing 36 pounds and imperiling his health. His sacrifice turned the members back to nonviolence. At the time Chavez said, “The truest act of courage, the strongest act of being human, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice. To be human is to suffer for others.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Is being inhuman causing others to suffer using violence? Why or why not? Chavez repeated the fast in 1972 for 24 days, and again in 1988, for 36 days.

4. In reading #4, Noah Levine writes about the spiritual revolutionary as a practitioner of nonviolence, understanding, and care. Who are some of the spiritual revolutionaries that you know about? Are there some you have known directly? In either case, what qualities did they have that you admire? Levine writes, “The truth is that violence is never the answer. There is no winner in violent conflict, only harm caused to both sides.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Are we violent by nature, by nurture, or both? What are the implications of your response? If the capacity to be nonviolent requires the ability and willingness to suffer on behalf of others, is violence chosen over suffering? Why or why not? Suffering on behalf of others requires both empathy and compassion. Given this, what character traits do you associate with nonviolent action? With violent action? The spiritual, *Down by the Riverside*, has the refrain “I ain’t gonna study war no more.” What is required of us not to “study” violence anymore?
5. In reading #5, Thích Nhất Hạnh shares his *Nonviolence Manifesto*. It begins with words similar to our first principle. In what ways do the following UU principles support the cultivation and practice of nonviolence? 1st, “The inherent worth and dignity of every person;” 2nd, “Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;” 5th, “The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our

congregations and in society at large;” 6th, “The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; and 7th, “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” Beyond these, does your faith as a Unitarian Universalist compel you to practice nonviolence? If yes, how? If no, why not?

6. In reading #6, Parker Palmer writes that nonviolence requires “a single ‘habit of the heart:’ to be in the world nonviolently means learning to hold the tension of opposites, trusting that the tension itself will pull our hearts and minds open to a third way of thinking and acting.” What are some of the opposites in life that we must engage that challenge us with their tension (e.g., love/hate, war/peace, wealthy/poor, etc.)? Is there a third way in any of these, that is a way to reconcile the opposites? Why or why not? Palmer, however, is a realist, and acknowledges that third ways may not be possible. Do you agree? Why or why not? He writes, “The insight at the heart of nonviolence is that we live in a tragic gap— ...[and] we must learn to stand in the tragic gap, faithfully holding the tension between reality and possibility. Do you agree that there is a tragic gap? Why or why not? If there is one, what other “habits of the heart” are necessary to stand/live in the tragic gap so that we might temper despair with hope?
7. In reading #7, theologian Stanley Hauerwas writes that, “America is a very violent country. That we are so has everything to do with our impatience.” Do you agree that America is a very violent country? Why or why not? What role might impatience play in cultivating, propagating, and resorting to violence again and again? Is violence such a part of our culture that it is the default whenever conflict arises? Why or why not? According to a theory by G. Q. Durham, David James Duncan writes, “About all it takes to make war interesting is a life. The appeal of trying to kill others without being killed yourself is that it brings suspense, terror, honor, disgrace, rage, tragedy, treachery and occasionally even heroism within range of guys who, in times of peace, might lead lives of unmitigated blandness.” Perhaps this is overreach, but do we make violence “interesting” through the news, social media,

TV and movies, video games, our own predilections, and so much more? How? Why? Duncan concludes, “But baseball is one activity that is able to generate suspense and excitement on a national scale, just like war. And baseball can only be played in peace.” Do you agree? Why or why not? According to John Thorn, the term “national pastime” was first given to baseball in the 1850s, to connect baseball to the public’s health and well-being. “There were propagandists for baseball becoming the American equivalent of cricket, to provide for rugged constitutions and ruddy cheeks.” Baseball’s role may be exaggerated, but consider how Hauerwas concludes his argument, “...The patience of nonviolence is not an ideal, but rather lies at the heart of the practices and habits that sustain our everyday life. ...Our very bodies were given to us so that we might learn to be patient.” Do you agree? Why or why not? What are the fruits of patience, that impatience will never know?
The following questions are related to the Readings from the Common Bowl.

8. Thomas Merton was concerned that the frenzy of our activism is a kind of violence that destroys our own inner capacity for peace. Do you agree? Why or why not? It is said that the most effective activism is grounded in spiritual practice. This was true for Gandhi and King. Why might this be the case? What keeps you grounded so that all that you do is more meaningful and rewarding?
9. Stokely Carmichael voiced his concern that King’s nonviolent protest failed because the United States did not have a conscience. Do you agree? Why or why not? While there is a long way to go in making Black Lives Matter, progress was made through nonviolent protests in the aftermath of the tragic and needless death of George Floyd by awakening people’s conscience and changing hearts. (David J. Garrow criticized Carmichael’s handling of the Black Power movement as being “more destructive than constructive.”) Is nonviolence a process of winning one heart at a time? Why or why not? Is this enough? Why or why not?
10. In his first quote, John Lewis suggested that people are taught to hate, to abuse others. Do you agree? For such people, where does

goodness lie? How can it be aroused? How can it be used to make them aware of what John Lewis called the “divine spark” in others?

11. In his second quote, John Lewis wrote about suffering. It is an aspect of nonviolent protest as advocated by both King and Gandhi. It is not suffering for the sake of suffering, and it requires “on the part of the sufferer ...a graceful heart, an accepting and open heart, a heart that holds no malice toward the inflictors of his or suffering.” What is necessary to cultivate such a heart? What are the benefits of doing so? The liabilities? Did you see this kind of heart in the life of John Lewis? How did it inform his actions?
12. Alycee Lane builds on the thoughts of John Lewis. She writes that “to live a life of nonviolence one must be willing to soften—to open one’s heart to others, to forgive, to be compassionate, to be graceful, to be loving toward others and oneself, to be kind.” Do you agree with her? How can we soften others if we have not already softened ourselves? She counsels that we must embrace qualities of the feminine in place of “some masculine idea of the justice-seeking self.” Do you agree? Why or why not? What might a feminine take on justice and power look like? How might this inform the work of nonviolence?
13. Arun Gandhi, a grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, equates nonviolence with truth, as his grandfather did. He then expands nonviolence to include “the search for the meaning of life.” What meaning do people find in violence? What meaning do people find in nonviolence? Arun Gandhi contrasts violence that involves greed, selfishness, possessiveness, and dominance with nonviolence that values love, compassion, understanding, and respect. Do you agree? What other characteristics would you add to each?
14. Linda Lantieri stresses the importance of teaching young people the skills related to emotional intelligence. What skills help in resolving conflict nonviolently? What gets in the way and/or intensifies the conflict? What then can be done?
15. Joshua Schultz suggests that our communication can be violent, harming ourselves and others. We know that violent communication is often profoundly abusive. Have you experienced

violent communication? How did it make you feel? How did you respond? If violent communication is the norm in politics, what can be done to change it?

16. The Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation is concerned about the challenge of violent communication, since the preponderance of media coverage is on violence. The lack of balance weakens our collective valuing of nonviolence. Who is someone you know who has participated in nonviolent conflict resolution? What were the circumstances? What lessons did you take from it? How can these be applied in our daily lives? How can nonviolence be made more visible and persuasive?
17. Theologian Carter Heyward states that war-makers often do not know what they are doing. As reminders of this, we only need look at the wars America waged in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. She counsels that we have compassion for both victims of violence and for those who wage war and inflict violence. Do you agree with this? Why or why not? If we cannot have compassion for the latter, how will they ever learn compassion? How we will ever be able to engage them regarding nonviolence?

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person the time claimed. Using a timer allows the facilitator to also listen fully.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together and the experience of exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice: *We extinguish this flame* by Elizabeth Selle Jones

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Source: [SLT #456](#)

Closing Words: *Practice Peace* by Rev. Kate Lore

So be strong, my friends. Learn more, but don’t be delayed by not knowing enough. Until we meet again, may you cultivate empathy, embrace compassion and practice peace.

Source: [no longer online](#)

