THE QUALITIES OF NONVIOLENCE

What is nonviolence?

DISCUSSION

It is necessary to identify these judgements because:
1. A certain kind of nonviolence has sometimes contributed to these attitudes. It is therefore important to distinguish between stereotypes about nonviolence and the active nonviolence we want to explore in this program; and

2. Most of us, at some level of awareness, share some or all of these interpretations. It is important, therefore, to raise them and address them, rather than pretending that these objections do not exist. Often, it is these attitudes that subvert and destroy a genuine nonviolence.

THE PRINCIPLES OF NONVIOLENCE

Principles of Active Nonviolence (from Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service)

1. All are wounded, and all are sacred and deserving of respect.
2. Everyone has a piece of the truth.
3. Conflict is normal and through it we seek to determine the Truth.
4. The means we use to address conflict must agree with the ends we seek.
5. Nonviolence is the power of the people.
6. Self-discipline, control, and respect are necessary.

Six Principles of Nonviolence (as outlined by Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Principle One: Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.
It is active nonviolent resistance to evil.
It is aggressive spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.
It is always persuading your opponent of the righteousness of your cause.
It is only passive in its non-aggression toward its enemy.

Principle Two: Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.
The end result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation.
The purpose of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community.

Principle Three: Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice not people.
Nonviolence recognizes that evil-doers are also victims and are not evil people.
The nonviolent resister seeks to defeat evil, not people.

**Principle Four: Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform.**
Nonviolence accepts suffering without retaliation.
Nonviolence accepts violence if necessary, but will never inflict it.
Nonviolence willingly accepts the consequences of its acts.
Unearned suffering is redemptive and has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities.
Suffering has the power to convert the enemy when reason fails.

**Principle Five: Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.**
Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as the body.
Nonviolent love is spontaneous, unmotivated, unselfish, and creative.
Nonviolent love gives willingly knowing *that return* might be hostility.
Nonviolent love is active not passive.
Nonviolent love is unending in its ability to forgive in order to restore community.
Nonviolent love does not sink to the level of the hater.
Love for the enemy is how we demonstrate love for ourselves.
Love restores community and resists injustice.
Nonviolence recognizes the fact that all life is interrelated.

**Principle Six: Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.**
The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win.
Nonviolence believes that God is a God of justice.

**WHAT IS TRANSFORMATIVE NONVIOLENCE?**
Transformative nonviolence is an ongoing process of personal and social transformation that is a way of being and acting rooted in the power of love, in the desire for the well-being of all, and in the longing to the end of the cycle of personal, interpersonal and social-structural violence.

Transformative nonviolence often includes:

- Making contact with the woundedness and sacredness in our lives and in the lives of others.
- Creatively and courageously opening safe space for active listening and for acknowledging that each of us has a piece of the truth.
- Transforming Us/Them thinking and doing.
Seeking to recognize and actively transform coercive and dominative differences of power.

Mobilizing nonviolent person-power and people-power as creative alternatives to patterns of domination, to passive acceptance of those patterns, or to counter-violence as a way of challenging those patterns.

Taking initiatives to change the dynamics of violence by creating solutions that are just and compassionate and that genuinely address the causes of conflict.

Transformative nonviolence often involves our embarking on an ongoing spiritual formation process. It means compassionately challenging our own scripts. It means de-centering and re-centering the self that has been consciously and unconsciously shaped by patterns of violence in our families, in our communities, in our society. It means taking action that helps us “act our way” into new thinking, feeling, believing. It often involves envisioning how the source and meaning of our lives is a nature that is inherently nonviolent, and one in which wholeness for us and for all beings is natural, and calls us to experiment with and embody this “nonviolent life” in the healing of ourselves, our families, our communities, and our world.