

Shalom! Toward a More Effective, More Faithful Approach to Conflict and Violence

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When people of faith reflect on their personal encounters with [violence](#), their responses are often very moving, and illustrate the breadth and seriousness of the problem in our society: "A loved one brutally mugged"... "Observing my children act out violent scenes from a children's cartoon"... "Witnessing the far-reaching effects of domestic abuse on a friend"... "Joining the military as an idealistic recruit and seeing first-hand how awful war really is"... "Meeting people who were tortured in a Central American war, and later finding out the U.S. was backing the government that was responsible"....

Experiences of [nonviolence](#) are equally diverse and moving: "Discovering the power of forgiving someone who I didn't think deserved it"... "Watching a principal who is barely 5 feet tall use only words to pull an angry 6 foot student back from threats of violence"... "Learning from a film about [Gandhi](#), [Day](#), [Bonhoeffer](#), or Romero that nonviolence isn't weakness, it's a different kind of strength than violence"... "Working with the poor in a year of service at a fraction of the salary of my fast-track friends and seeing them come to envy my choice"... "Taking part in civil disobedience and experiencing first-hand that unarmed truth can be more powerful than violence." (Quotes are from participants in LPF peacemaking workshops.)

Sharing personal stories of *nonviolence* reminds us how much we need to hear positive experiences and images of hope. Our stories of *violence* suggest how wide-ranging are the problems we face, and how inadequate are the methods for addressing conflict in our violence-steeped culture. And those limitations exist on every level of our lives from interpersonal to community to international. In contrast, it is very rewarding to explore the richness of a gospel perspective on conflict and peacemaking.

A good place to start is an activity we often use in our [workshops](#) that examines how from childhood we are socialized into flawed, one-sided ways of addressing everyday conflict in our homes and workplaces. Participants come to understand those limitations as well as insights from the most respected manuals on the subject such as the popular book, *Getting to Yes* by Fisher and Ury. We discuss and try out skills they offer such as "learning to listen first," looking for "win-win" solutions, and getting past people's egos and emotions to focus on the problem. Such insights and skills alone could dramatically improve how many of us address conflict in our families, congregations, communities, and world.

But that's just a beginning. The gospel perspective we seek to explore in our workshops – and outline in this essay – moves us beyond this in at least three ways: First, we're encouraged to investigate conflict and violence on a much *broader and deeper level* (Part One of this essay). This lays the groundwork for us to plumb the deeper insights and skills of a *gospel perspective on our response* to violence and injustice (Part Two). Finally, we can *explore examples* that illustrate important elements of that response (Part Three) – and as well, notice how rarely they are mentioned in most discussions of the subject.

Part 1. Digging Deeper

A first step is to broaden the discussion beyond particular instances of conflict or violence to look at the larger picture. Let's begin with some questions: Why does the U.S. have twice the prison population per capita of most other industrialized nations? Why are most conflicts shown on television resolved with force – often violent force – and only a tiny handful with the techniques experts say should be taught in our schools? What should we make of all the grossly violent and sexist computer games that are not only widely available but are the best sellers? What can be inferred from the ineffectiveness we've seen in Congress in recent years, from [gun violence](#) and "stand your ground laws" to immigration reform? How can we account for the extremely high rates of [domestic violence](#) in the U.S.? What might explain

the growing levels of violence in spectator sports? Why do so many leaders of both political parties claim deep Christian values but speak mostly of toughness, vengeance and our [right to use military force](#) when there's an international crisis? While talk shows, articles, community or church forums, etc. regularly consider such questions, it is rare to find serious exploration of the deeper realities and assumptions that underlie them (let alone effective methods to address them).

For such problems to be as deep-seated as they are, across such a range of our experience, suggests a structural problem. Our culture not only has serious deficiencies dealing with conflict and violence, but by all the evidence, our culture is stuck. And it is stuck in ways the church is uniquely equipped to help out, if we can grasp the gifts of the gospel that might make such help possible.

Engaging those structural problems in addressing conflict and violence has the potential to improve at a minimum the way our families, congregations, and church committees deal with conflict. A more serious effort could help the church play a useful, even transforming role in helping our society grapple with conflict, violence, and injustice. And such an effort, in turn, could revitalize our church.

The problem is that most Christians are working with only a fraction of the resources of our own biblical tradition. To grasp the power of those resources requires a serious shift in our thinking from what is commonly found in the larger culture or church. While that shift poses a challenge for us, those [biblical resources](#) also offer the encouragement and hope we need to take on that challenge.

Let's start by framing our question in a different way: What does a biblically-grounded perspective offer to help us understand violence and conflicts, especially ones that are caused, held in place, or exacerbated by power imbalances? First, it helps to remember that Jesus lived in a culture that was enmeshed in often oppressive power structures, from the Roman occupation to a wide array of gender, ethnic, class, and religious relations. These were structures that made it revolutionary for Jesus to converse with the [woman](#) at the well, choose a Samaritan as the hero of a story, or urge "walking the second mile." In the opening chapters of *Engaging the Powers*, [Walter Wink](#) shows how today – as well as in Jesus' time – such oppressive, institutional structures together form a 'domination system' and he offers valuable insights for understanding and confronting those structures. In so doing, he opens up for us a fresh and challenging new dimension of discipleship, of servant leadership.

We often hear the U.S. referred to as a 'Christian' culture; but take a closer look at the foundations of how it deals with violence. Far from dealing with our conflicts out of Jesus' call to discipleship, to [Shalom](#), the great majority of them are approached from the stance of what Wink terms "the myth of redemptive violence." This is the conviction that justice and an end to violence can be sought through violence, whether in a punitive criminal justice system, in the rhetoric of the "war on terrorism," in many years of tolerating [domestic violence](#), or in most action film and computer game versions of how to rid the world of evil. But the worldview or "myth" of redemptive violence reinforces and reproduces both violence and counter-productive views of its efficacy in our culture. And because it functions largely on a subconscious level, it is all the more compelling and dangerous. The psycho-dynamics of the great majority of children's cartoons, [computer games](#), and films illustrate this myth with great clarity:

Children identify with the good guy so they can think of themselves as good. This enables them to project out onto the bad guy their own repressed anger, violence, rebelliousness, or lust and then vicariously to enjoy their own evil by watching the bad guy initially prevail.... When the good guy finally wins, viewers are then able to reassert control over their own inner tendencies, repress them, and reestablish a sense of goodness without coming to any insight about their own inner evil. The villain's punishment provides catharsis; one forswears the villain's ways and heaps condemnation on him in a guilt-free orgy of aggression. Salvation is found through identification with the hero. (Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be*, page 49)

So it should be clear that these cartoons, [computer games](#), and action films are not just escapist fun. Together they express a belief system in fundamental competition with our culture's supposed Judeo-Christian values. The sheer scale of the impact of these [media](#) should raise serious questions. The average child graduates from high school having spent more time in front of television and computer

screens than in the classroom. Not more time than the school conflict resolution program or civics class, church youth program and Sunday School, but more time than is spent in all classes! Wink observes:

What church or synagogue can even remotely keep pace with the myth of redemptive violence in hours spent teaching children or in quality of presentation? (Think of the typical children's sermon. How bland by comparison.)... No other religious system has ever remotely rivaled the myth of redemptive violence in its ability to catechize its young so totally. From the earliest age, children are awash in depictions of violence as the ultimate solution to human conflict. (Ibid, page 54)

Our experience of conflict and violence is characterized by what Wink, Rene Girard and others have persuasively argued is a "spiral of violence." We see it every day. The supervisor comes down on the worker who can't strike back at the source of his frustration so his anger falls on his wife who hits the kids who kick the dog...(and those children are more likely to become bullies or grow up to be abusive).

Part 2. The Gospel Vision of *Shalom*

If indeed our culture is stuck when it comes to violence, it should come as good news that the gospel vision has a lot to offer on getting unstuck, on peacemaking. It may be helpful at the outset to note that the message of Jesus, notably in the Sermon on the Mount, is nothing like the spiritualized, even wimpy approach to conflict and violence that I grew up with as a Christian and which is still an all too prevalent stereotype. For Jesus offers a genuine alternative to the myth of redemptive violence, and to wimpy passivity – an alternative to the false choice of "fight or flight." As mentioned above, the historical context and audience of Jesus' teachings was the powerless, the oppressed. And he offered them a way to stand up to the Romans, to assert their humanity and to transform their society through love. Jesus called them to act in powerful and creative ways to transform oppressive and violent situations.

The heart of what Wink and others have done to recover a biblically-grounded response to conflict and injustice is developed in what Wink calls "Jesus' Third Way." He shows how Jesus offers not only a different approach to conflict, but one with a radically more useful and compelling perspective on *power* as well. That perspective has influenced the most creative theories and actions on the ethical use of power, from Penn, Woolman, and Ballou, to Tolstoy, [Gandhi](#), and [King](#). [*In fact, as Gandhi struggled to develop a truly moral approach to conflict, he first found it expressed in the Way of Jesus, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, and only later was able to see those insights more deeply in the Bhagavad Gita of his own tradition.*]

There is wealth of insight to be found in the gospel vision as explored in Wink – and in step-by-step, participatory [peace education](#) programs such as Lutheran Peace Fellowship's "Leadership Training in Peacemaking" and "Peacemaking in the Real World," Pace e Bene's "Engage" and "From Violence to Wholeness" programs and the Fellowship of Reconciliation Nonviolence Trainings to mention just a few.

For instance, Wink's chapter "On Not Becoming What We Hate" extends his case with a wide range of examples, from the U.S. in Vietnam and the deepening Israeli-Palestinian standoff, to how prisons socialize inmates into criminal behavior. He notes that programs like Alcoholics Anonymous, or cancer support groups have evolved methods that are more successful and sustainable than what they replaced.

In "The Acid Test: Loving Enemies," Wink develops the insight that we can learn from our enemies to understand those parts of ourselves that we dislike, and to come to know our own tendencies for evil. And through grace, we are offered the possibility of rising above ourselves, the gift to recognize the good and bad in everyone, the ability to see that we are all sinners and that we can change through love.

Such insights have considerable potential to transform our effectiveness in dealing with conflict as individuals and groups. The more I wrestle with these concepts in our workshops, and my own experience of responding to conflict, the more it seems that Henri Nouwen is on to something when he asserts:

If anyone should ask you what are the most radical words in the Gospel, you need not hesitate to reply. "Love your enemies." It is these words that reveal to us most clearly the kind of love proclaimed by Jesus... Love for one's enemy is the touchstone of being a Christian.

As we've discussed, by this standard, when it comes to dealing with conflict and violence our culture is stuck. It is in the grip of a worldview that is the antithesis of the [Christian perspective](#) we so strongly assert that we have. That worldview dominates [media](#) depictions of conflict and both reinforces and reproduces itself. And as we've suggested, our culture is stuck in ways the church is uniquely equipped to help if we can grasp the gifts of the gospel that make such help possible.

One place to start is with our language. The word used by Jesus, the prophets before, and the early church after means more than just our word "peace." [Shalom](#) fully includes our concepts of "justice," "inclusive community," "wholeness," "healing." And the concept that comes closest to describing how *Shalom* might be achieved in our violent world is "nonviolence," as many of our ablest theologians on the subject have concluded – [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#), Joan Chittister, John Dear, Mary Evelyn Jegen, Rosemary Ruether, Donald Shriver, Dorothee Soelle, [Walter Wink](#), John Howard Yoder... (resource guide, page 6).

Examining specific examples of nonviolence can be helpful. We'll look at some brief depictions of nonviolence used in national or international conflicts, with which we are typically more familiar than with examples on an interpersonal level. But even they present a challenge. First, because the news media have so rarely understood or pursued that dimension. Second, in order to realize the potential of nonviolence, we have to get past – and help our congregations and communities work through – the many stereotypes and misconceptions that are so common regarding nonviolence: for example, that compared to violence it is weakness or passivity... that nonviolence might work on easy conflicts but when things get tough we must resort to violence.... Such misconceptions have led many practitioners to use the phrase "active nonviolence" to remind people that nonviolence is not weakness but a different kind of power for confronting injustice or conflict. Moreover, using it calls for a different perspective on the dynamics of conflict, responses to the opponent's actions, steps that lead toward reconciliation, skills we can choose from, etc.

Part 3. From Gandhi to the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement

In recent years, many events have brought elements of this deeper understanding of nonviolence into view, often in dramatic ways. Nonviolence has been central to movements ranging from [Gandhi](#) in India to teachers in Nazi-occupied Norway, from the U.S. civil rights movement to organizing of farmworkers by Cesar Chavez and others – and an immense number and variety of efforts before and since.

For example, the commitment to active, disciplined nonviolence of the vast majority of Arab Spring participants was fundamental to its successes – many of which were considered unthinkable just a few years earlier. Protests in a number of countries were larger than any in memory, in some cases involving the occupation of public sites for weeks at a time. Those protests led to the fall of three repressive regimes and major changes in the lives and hopes of millions of people from Algeria to Yemen. This was achieved despite the arrest and torture of many protest leaders. Virtually all activists resisted the impulse to bring weapons to protests despite violence and provocation from security units, police, and soldiers.

It is crucial to understand that the uprisings were preceded by years of nonviolence training and preparation and organizing by the leaders. Quite a few traveled to Bosnia and other countries to learn from leaders of other nonviolence movements. Many thousands of activists read and shared analyses by such notable nonviolence theorists as Gene Sharp, and depictions of successful nonviolence campaigns, e.g. a widely circulated comic book on the Montgomery Bus Boycott by the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Many of these had long since been translated into Arabic (and many other languages). Finally, notice how little of the above was reported in all the mass media depictions of the Arab Spring.

Occupy Wall Street is another, albeit also mixed, example of the use of nonviolence on a large scale. It began in the fall of 2011. In less than two years it had sparked "Occupy" movements in over 1000 U.S. communities and 900 cities around the world. These movements were notable for their use of participatory democracy, abstaining from violence, modeling of direct action, and the rapid spread of their core messages. It is fair to say that Occupy sparked a major shift in public awareness regarding the growth of inequality in the U.S., and of corporate corruption, the impact of money in politics, and related issues.

At the heart of the success of both movements was the activists themselves – their courage under fire, their grasp of the discipline of nonviolence, and their taking on all the tasks of organizing, nonviolence

training, communication, food, sanitation... and for doing so at levels necessary to keep the movement from collapsing or being more vulnerable to manipulation or take-over by opposing or violent elements.

These qualities can be found at the heart of most nonviolence movements. To counter the silence in much of our media and culture regarding how effective nonviolence has been, it is worth noting that nonviolence movements have been successful on an incredibly wide range of issues, in every period of history and every part of the world. Many confronted ruthless opposition and still succeeded. Here are a few more examples that illustrate the effectiveness, diversity, and creativity of nonviolence movements:

1980 The **Solidarity movement** is organized in Poland. Often pronounced dead, by 1989 it wins every available seat in Parliament. It committed not one violent act, despite repression including the killing of 100 members.

1986 The nonviolent "**People Power**" movement in the Philippines brings down the repressive Marcos dictatorship. Nonviolent training and huge protests prevent the violent military responses from succeeding. It inspires movements in Asia, South Africa, and Eastern Europe.

1989 **Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and East Germany** all win freedom from Soviet control by nonviolent means. Nonviolent movements in the Soviet Union arise and develop in **Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia, Armenia, Moldavia, and the Ukraine.**

1989 The Chinese government suppresses a nonviolent student protest at **Tiananmen Square** but not before images are televised around the world, such as one of an unarmed young man stopping a column of tanks.

1990 **Disabled demonstrators** at the Capitol building in Wash. DC demand passage of a bill to guarantee their civil rights. In a dramatic moment, 60 people crawl out of their wheelchairs and up the Capitol steps.

1991 The **Moscow** parliament building is surrounded by tens of thousands of Russian demonstrators to protect

Pres. Yeltsin from a coup that fails despite its command of four million soldiers and 1000s of tanks and aircraft.

1994 **Nelson Mandela** is elected the first black President of South Africa, just four years after he is released from jail. Ending apartheid took years of nonviolent protest in South Africa and around the globe – e.g., student protests persuaded 20% of U.S. universities to end investments in corporations with ties to South Africa.

1998-99 Thousands of cities, schools, churches, and groups endorse the **Nobel Appeal for Peace**. The UN designates 2001-10 as the **Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence**. Over 74 million people sign the Decade's pledge of nonviolence by the end of 2002.

2006 On May 1st, 1,500,000 people come together in the largest **immigrant rights** protest in U.S. history. May Day – for 60 years a workers' rights celebration – also becomes an annual event supporting immigration reform.

2007 In just a decade, **Jubilee movement** citizen lobbying leads to the cancelation of more than \$120 billion of debt owed by developing countries. (Since 1986, the world's 66 poorest countries had paid \$230 billion in debt service – more than they received from donor nations in that time.)

2010-12 **The Arab Spring**...2011-13 **Occupy Movement**...
(just 12 out of 150 stories of nonviolence on LPP's 'Path of Hope')

Even these few examples challenge the stereotype of nonviolence being passive or weak, effective in only certain situations, or an exception among other means of change. Various nonviolence timelines and databases include hundreds of such examples. People of faith were at the heart of a great many of them.

Countering violence today thus calls for a broader understanding of our problem: Violence is not just individual acts of injury and oppression, and the solution is not just a matter of stopping or punishing those acts. We are – all of us – immersed in a "culture of violence" that needs to be understood and transformed. We will do best if we ground our work in the depth of insight and breadth of practical success of such nonviolent movements so that "together we can build a new culture of nonviolence that can give hope to all humanity" (quoting the "Appeal" signed by virtually every living Nobel Peace Laureate at the time that sparked the Decade for Peace and Nonviolence, 2001-10, the largest such effort in UN history).

And for our churches, active nonviolence offers nothing less than an opportunity for us to recover a neglected dimension of the gospel. Its potent resources encourage us to experiment with ways to improve peace education in our Sunday Schools, youth groups, and Bible study, and to better handle conflicts in our families, church committees, communities, and world. Moreover, it holds out a vision of the Church playing a significant, even transforming role in helping our society grapple with conflict and violence. Such service could, in turn, dramatically revitalize our Church. Blessed, indeed, are the peacemakers!

Sources and Further Directions

Introduction, Conflict Resolution

John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, very brief, and the best introduction on the subject
Marshall Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication, Language of Compassion*, exceptionally useful and practical: www.cnvc.org
Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes*, widely used book on conflict skills; Ury, *The Third Side*, on some underlying issues
The quotes on violence and nonviolence that begin this essay are from participants in LPF's Leadership Training in Peace-making program; other high quality sources of nonviolence training include Pace e Bene and the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

1. Going Deeper and 2. The Gospel Meaning of Shalom

most of these resources explore both the culture of violence and the alternative of nonviolence

Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be* is the best single volume on these issues, perfect for book study groups; it is a briefer version of his seminal study, *Engaging the Powers*. Many cite Wink's work as having transformed their thinking on biblical peacemaking.
Robert Herr and Judy Zimmerman Herr, eds, *Transforming Violence*: excellent anthology on peacemaking, local to global
John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*: an illuminating exploration of nonviolence in the book of Luke
Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation*: rare for the depth of its analysis
Kelly Denton-Borhaug, *U.S. War-Culture, Sacrifice and Salvation*: how traditional Christian views support war and militarism
George S. Johnson, ed., *Courage to Think Differently*, author: *Beyond Guilt*: accessible, thought-provoking, eye-opening volumes
others: Henri Nouwen, *Road to Peace*; Donald Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies*; Dorothee Soelle, *Creative Disobedience*; Roland Bainton, Gregory Baum, Daniel Berrigan, Rita Nakashima Brock, Walter Brueggemann, John Dear, Jim Douglass, Mary Evelyn Jegan, William Klassen, Jim McGinnis, Richard McSorley, Thomas Merton, Rosemary Ruether, Cheryl Sanders, Ronald Sider, Glen Stassen, Willard Swartley

3. An Introduction to Nonviolence in Action

William Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful*: explores successful nonviolent movements around the world; it is the companion book to the fine 6-part PBS video series and adds context, analysis, more stories...(see: www.aforcemorepowerful.org)
Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*: documents efficacy of nonviolent movements; important.
The Path of Hope: 150 nonviolent movements and leaders in brief; a dozen group activities; resources: www.lutheranpeace.org
Michael Nagler, *The Nonviolence Handbook*; with Marc Pilisuk, eds., *Peace Movements Worldwide*: accessible and very useful
Gene Sharp, *There are Realistic Alternatives, From Dictatorship to Democracy*, etc., download pdfs for free: www.aeinsteinstudy.org
Global Nonviolent Action Database: over 800 campaigns from 190 countries; fully searchable: <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>
others: Ira Chernus, *American Nonviolence*; Angie O'Gorman, ed., *The Universe Bends Toward Justice*; Walter Wink, ed., *Peace Is the Way*; Gene Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action* (readable 3 vol. study); Stephen Zunes, et al, *Nonviolent Social Movements*

4. Nonviolence Through the Eyes of Participants

Jim Wallis and Joyce Hollyday, eds, *A Cloud of Witnesses*: superb profiles of peace heroes by Sojourners magazine writers
Michael True, *Justice Seekers, Peace Makers and To Construct Peace*: dozens of brief stories (both together in *People Power*)
Pam McAllister, *You Can't Kill the Spirit, This River of Courage, Reweaving the Web of Life*: on women and nonviolence
Richard Deats, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Spirit Led Prophet* and *Mahatma Gandhi*: superb brief biographies of two key leaders
Robert Cooney and Helen Michalowski, *Power of the People*: richly illustrated history of nonviolence in the U.S., familiar and new
others: Deena Guzder, *Divine Rebels*; Catherine Ingram, *In the Footsteps of Gandhi*; Mary Ann Luke, ed., *Pilgrims and Seekers*; Milton Meltzer, *Ain't Gonna Study War No More*; Rosalie G. Riegler, *Crossing the Line: Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace*

Biographies/accounts by and about Dan and Philip Berrigan, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Aung San Suu Kyi, Cesar Chavez, Rachel Corrie, Dorothy Day, Dave Dellinger, Fannie Lou Hamer, Myles Horton, Kathy Kelly, Badshah Khan, John Lewis, Nelson Mandela, Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Thomas Merton, Rosa Parks, William Penn, Helen Prejean, Oscar Romero, St. Francis, Desmond Tutu, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Andrew Young...

Congregational Tools: Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Public Church*: brief, superb intro to Lutheran theological grounding of peace & justice activity; Daniel Buttry, *Peace Ministry*; Jim McGinnis, *Journey Into Compassion*; Carolyn Schrock-Shenk and Lawrence Ressler, *Making Peace With Conflict*; Peter Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times* and *Healthy Congregations*;

Worship Resources: Bill Kellerman, *Seasons of Faith and Conscience*; Dieter Hessel, ed., *Social Themes of the Christian Year*; Jim McGinnis, *Call to Peace*; Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer and Bret Hesla, *Worship in the Spirit of Jesus*; Cindy Pile, ed., *Our Prayers Rise Like Incense*; Lutheran Peace Fellowship, *Peace Worship Resources* (60 pgs) and PeaceDeck (48 cards)

On the author/resource compiler: Glen Gersmehl directs Lutheran Peace Fellowship and has led over 900 workshops on issues of peace, justice, and nonviolence. He has developed many social change resources including computer activities used by over a million people. His education work and activism led to an invitation to serve as the U.S. delegate to meetings held in India to plan the UN Decade for Peace. Glen coordinated a university peace studies program and the nation's largest community leadership training center. He has presented testimony or worked as a consultant for 20 government agencies and legislative committees, and taken on leadership roles in projects ranging from the arms trade (Federation of American Scientists) and non-proliferation (United Nations), to social service policy (a White House conference)...

For more on nonviolence, biblical peacemaking, or nonviolence training; for an in-depth resource guide; or to offer comments, please contact:
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