



On Thursday, February 16, the Warrnambool Social Justice Group (WSJG) commenced the first of regular discussion sessions and courses on the art of nonviolence, using especially adapted material from *Pace e Bene Australia Nonviolence Service*. The discussions took place in the Gathering Space beside St Joseph's Church.

This first discussion came under the banner of "Engage in Nonviolent Living". Most of the comments were around how good it felt to be able to discuss a wide range of topics in a safe and supportive environment, with people who respect each other's opinions.

We all experience conflict or bullying of some kind in our lives. Some conflict turns into violent action. Conflict between people is inevitable but the consequences do not have to be disastrous. *The Hands of Nonviolence* can guide us towards a satisfactory solution, regardless of the situation or the level of conflict.

After considering one definition of violence and doing an exercise to demonstrate what 'Nonviolence' means, we looked at some common scenarios. These revealed the very different views we hold when it comes to deciding what is violent and what is not when physical violence is not involved. One person commented that "the topics were challenging in a good way".

All those present were enthusiastic about continuing with regular meetings. Discussions will focus on the everyday practice of nonviolence in the home, workplace and community, as well as for nonviolence to be the grounding for activists striving for social change. Participants suggested some questions to be dealt with at future meetings, such as:

How do you break the cycle of entrenched attitudes and practices that are destructive to oneself and others?

Why is the Old Testament so full of violence?

How do corporations become committed to lead from the top to change the corporation's culture?

If you could start again, knowing what you know now, how would your outlook on life and parenting be different?

How do you advocate for change in the way politicians, and many of our friends, treat asylum seekers or people who are different?

How do you discipline children (people) without punishing them?

What is the meaning of life?

These questions, and many more that will no doubt arise, will be included in future discussions as we continue to explore nonviolent living.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 21 in the Gathering Space at St Joseph's Church, Lava Street, Warrnambool. People of all belief systems are welcome to take part in these discussions.

