

*The Justice and Peace Committee
Our Lady of the Lake Church
3508 NE 89th Street
Seattle, WA 98115*

June 21, 2008

Mayor Greg Nickels
City of Seattle
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Ave.
PO Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Dear Mayor Nickels,

We are disturbed by recent City of Seattle actions directed at the homeless. Among those actions are sweeps of homeless encampments with the confiscation or destruction of shelters and personal property, limitations on overnight parking even in industrial areas to prevent automobile habitation, and the precipitous closure of motels that house bordering-on-homeless people in the North End.

Two aspects of the homeless problem seem clear to us. First, homelessness is not a problem that can ever be solved by punitive measures. As we see it, the majority of homeless are not that way by choice. Second, the number of homeless here as elsewhere is likely to grow considerably in the short term, a consequence, in large part, of the spending by our national government on war and weapons and of abuses by too many institutions within the financial sector. Those two points argue for a different approach to homelessness than the City of Seattle is now pursuing.

Rather than specific suggestions, we offer a prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide you to find, in the creativity and good will of the people in Seattle, fair and respectful ways to shelter (or find sites of shelter for) those most needy among us.

We acknowledge and applaud your work in pursuit of reduced greenhouse emissions in Seattle and your leadership with regard to engaging other US communities in the fight against global warming. We are proud to be citizens of a city whose mayor has actively and progressively led on that issue. Because homelessness is a national (and international) issue with such harsh consequences on the least seen and represented of our brethren, we ask from you the same kind of leadership in pursuit of progressive solutions to short and long-term homelessness.

Let us all resolve to heed the words of the prophet Micah to "act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God" for the transformation of ourselves and the world.

Sincerely,

Parishioners of Our Lady of the Lake Church