

61. Nest Mission (for the Homeless) Lynnwood, Washington

Mailing: PO Box 5782, Lynnwood, WA. 98046

Mission site: Maplewood Presbyterian Church

19528 84th W. Edmonds, WA, 98026

Rev. Kyung Lee: Executive Dir. (253) 732-3929: LKH2024@yahoo.com

Rev. Deuksil Jung: Pres. of the Board: (206) 255-0676: dsjung12@yahoo.com

Rev. Jean Kim: Pastor/Mission/Mental health/Social Service Director:

(425) 563-3006: jeankim1935@yahoo.com

Who Are We? We are Korean-American immigrants, Christians who are abundantly blessed in the United States and therefore, obligated to God, and to this country which allowed us to put our roots down to make our new home here, raise children, and prosper in many ways. Considering this obligation, we would like to “pay back”--to return some of the blessings we have received by serving the most downtrodden, poor, and homeless people around us. We have all been volunteers serving this mission for the past seven years. A year ago we hired a part-time Executive Director. The rest of us continue to serve on a voluntary basis.

History and Purpose: The Nest Mission holds 501C(3) non-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service to carry out the following comprehensive mission. Our purpose consists in the following five aspects of service: 1) putting into action the compassion of Jesus Christ in serving the homeless, 2) helping end homelessness, 3) urging and challenging the Korean-American immigrant community to share their blessings with the local poor, 4) guiding the homeless to God that they may find hope and be motivated to live as responsible and productive citizens, and 5) helping the homeless and people with multiple difficulties to experience holistic salvation by meeting physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

We take our calling from the following Scriptural and historical bases:

- 1) Whereas God says to Israelites,

In the Promised Land, when you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, remember your God who blessed you (selected from Deut. 8:12-13), and, help the poor, aliens, widows and orphans among you (selected from Deut. 14:29; 15:7; 2); and

- 2) whereas Korean immigrants too are blessed in abundance in this country that welcomed us to lay our roots down, and
- 3) whereas God says in Isaiah 1: 11-17 that *our worship, prayers, songs, and offerings are meaningless to God unless we practice justice by helping the poor, widows, orphans and aliens*, and finally,
- 4) whereas today's orphans, widows and this country's aliens are the homeless,

it was resolved that **The Nest Mission** be co-founded initially by three pastors – the late Rev. Min Kwon Ok, Rev. Kyung Lee and Rev. Jean Kim in 2006, as a result of their discussions toward developing a homeless mission in the Edmonds/Lynnwood, Washington area. Late in the same year we applied for non-profit 501C (3) status, which was granted the next year, 2007. The mission was originally developed as a local mission to serve the needy homeless in our community. Later a few more pastors and a few more lay people joined our Board.

Who Are the People We Serve? We serve homeless brothers and sisters in the Edmonds, Lynnwood, Brier, and Mt. Lake Terrace vicinity, as well as people who come from the Everett and Bothell areas. These towns, small cities, and major suburbs are located about 15 -20 miles north of downtown Seattle. We believe that it is important to be aware that the homeless population we help includes those who previously held jobs, as well as people who had homes and families until our recent economic recession but lost all, and who are often now separated from families.

It is also important to recognize that some are employable but can't find work; some do odd jobs but do not earn enough to afford an apartment; and some have chronic substance abuse and/or mental health problems, but have not been able to obtain help with the kind of treatment that includes jobs and housing. In addition, some appear to be "fine," but are not physically and emotionally healthy enough to hold jobs, while still not "sick enough" to be hospitalized, or "qualified" for government aid. Many are victims of abuse, domestic violence and broken homes; many haven't had good role models and suffer from poor life skills; many have lost their hopes and motivations. These are people who "fall through the cracks." Low-income housing is insufficient, and availability is often compromised with long waiting lists. Furthermore, in the vicinity of the four or five cities, towns and suburbs listed above there is no emergency shelter--except one for women with children. Therefore,

others end up sleeping in cars, parks or streets. With limited resources, our priority for service goes to the homeless or needy neighbors who are in immediate crises, referred by area churches. Many of those who personally refer them, often their neighbors, are formerly homeless themselves. Among all of these, we see only a few Korean homeless. Considering this area then, with limited shelter opportunities, we see more homeless men than women. Needs are great and overwhelming. Feeding is just a basic—a starting point; we realize that we are called to serve beyond feeding—toward healing and a self-sufficient life—and in the process, ending homelessness.

Who Supports Us? We do not receive any public funding. Up until now, the major financial supporters are Korean immigrants with occasional minor support coming from the English speaking community. The size of monetary contributions range from \$10 to \$2,000 per month. Some support us with in-kind donations. We have many Korean-American angels who are willing to share their blessings with local homeless. We thank God for them. Praise the Lord!

Who Are Our Mission Partners? For weekly Friday evening dinners we partner with Maplewood Presbyterian Church at a free site in Edmonds; the host church cooks once a month and the remaining dinners are offered by Korean immigrants. We have a few English speaking friends in these groups. We partner with other churches for emergency assistance, labor and other work opportunities, Christmas gifts (including motel rooms, etc). Without partnership, this mission would be impossible! Together and with God's help, we have seen the following miracles:

Mission Programs: Since our major goal is ending homelessness, we offer the following services:

Rental Assistance: The basis of our rental assistance can be found in the words of Jesus: "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head*" (Matt. 8:20), and, later to those who people were metaphorically considered His sheep, "*I was a stranger and you welcomed me*" (Matt. 25:35), and continuing when , "*when you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to me,*" (Matt. 25: 40). We think of Jesus' homeless circumstance and his command to help the homeless. So we have been providing a "nest," a home, for the homeless individuals and families with the funds donated to our mission from many directions. That's the reason our program is called "Nest Mission;" for example, we help those who may have found an apartment but can't move in due to the lack of first month's rent or a deposit--partnering with the person under the condition that they expect income from the second month on and will be able to pay their rent. In processes like this, we have helped several hundreds of people who moved from shelter to permanent housing through a multitude of different shelters and or social service agencies. We all "chip in" to the mission of ending homelessness.

Guidelines for Rental Assistance: Persons or families that are in need of rental assistance must be homeless in the state of Washington. We are committed to

requesting that the shelter counselors to apply for assistance on behalf of their client(s). We further have committed to relying on the client's case workers to assess the needs of their clients and to follow up on the client afterwards.

The following specific guidelines apply:

- 1) A client must have found an apartment and be ready to move in, but needs assistance with first month rent and/or deposit.
- 2) A client must expect some income to afford the rent after moving in.
- 3) We won't be able to offer rental assistance more than once.
- 4) The amount of rental assistance will vary depending on each situation.
- 5) A client must receive an ongoing support service from an agency.
- 6) We will not discriminate against clients on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or legal status.
- 7) In order to expedite the process, we want to receive the application electronically. We will respond or issue a check within one week on a first-come-first-served basis.
- 8) We will not accept phone requests or direct phone calls from clients.

Emergency Respite Bed at Motels: Jesus indicated to his people in Matthew 25, *"When you...cared for the sick..., you have done it for me"* (Matt. 25: 36, 40). We offer motel rooms for homeless people who meet the following criteria:

- 1) They became ill, but were not "qualified" for hospitalization and cannot survive on the streets,
- 2) They were discharged from the hospital to the streets,
- 3) They are families with young children who are evicted with no place to go

To people who fit into these groups, we offer motel room. The length of stay ranges from a few days to one or two months – depending on their conditions and needs. It is short-term but life-saving for them to have a temporary place to stay warm and dry until they find a better and permanent place to move to or become able to handle the street life. For example, a homeless man had surgery for a hernia. He could hardly walk, and would have had to carry many bags, but was discharged right after surgery. We picked him up at the hospital and placed him in a motel for a month to recuperate. Another homeless man was almost required to amputate several of his toes because they wouldn't heal in the cold wet streets. We placed him in a motel for two months until his SSI check was approved. Through this action his toes were saved.

Healing Weekly Dinner: Since Jesus said, *"I was hungry and you gave me food; ...when you feed the hungry, you do it for me"* (Matt. 25:35, 40), Korean-American teams and the Maplewood Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) partner in cooking the weekly Friday dinner for the homeless at their local church's fellowship hall in Edmonds, Washington. It is a balanced hot dinner cooked with fresh groceries. We cook a fancy dinner, just as if we had Jesus himself at our table (see Matt 25: 35, 40). It is a

communion with Jesus, where we sing a communion song before each meal. It is therefore a heavenly banquet. We provide a good, nutritious meal, which is a joy for body and soul. In the process we also feed self-esteem to those who are despised; a good tonic for the sick; strength for the elderly; comfort for those whose hearts are aching; forgiveness for the guilt-ridden; welcome for the alienated; love for the deserted; hope for the discouraged; joy for the depressed; and a community for the lonely. Everyone is fed with Christ's love, and it is therefore a healing table and heavenly banquet, because the Spirit of Christ presents Himself in our midst. We are mindful of those who have health problems or are vegetarians for health or religious reasons. We include vegetables, fruits and a low fat diet. Our dinner is known among the homeless as the best in town.

Offer Daily Necessities: Jesus said, "*I was naked and you gave me clothing and when you do this to one the least of these you have done to me*" (Matt 25: 36, 40). After each Friday dinner we distribute items such as bus tickets, socks, razors, underwear, clothes, soap, shampoo, lotion, tooth brushes, tooth paste, batteries, toilet paper, ramen (noodles), etc. We give tents, carts, heavy duty sleeping bags, and blankets to those who sleep in parks. We also buy good rain shoes at inexpensive stores to give as needs come up.

Worship: 1) Spirituality for homeless people is very important, as they often ask serious spiritual questions as to who they are, identifying the purpose of their lives, and where God is in all of their struggles. 2) Many dinner guests express their needs to cry out to God for help. 3) The Board of the Nest Mission, as well as the Korean cooking groups, want to offer our dinner guests a chance to worship God as our purpose states, but we don't impose Christian faith on them. We respect their choices. We encourage them to come in, sit in the back and pray to their own God if they are not interested in our Christian God. 4) The worship service and the messages help undo the damage done to them by helping them experience a positive, loving and forgiving God rather than a judging, condemning God. 5) They are encouraged to lay down all of their troubles and guilt before God and experience healing. Fortunately we have four pastors who share preaching tasks.

Singing/Choir: As the Psalmist encouraged the worshipers, "*Praise the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings, Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts*" (Ps. 33:2-3), and, "*Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy*" (Ps. 63:4), the homeless sing when their hearts ache; most homeless people are victims of physical, emotional and/or sexual violence, many of whom carry unresolved wounds. Thus, they sing out all of their pains, problems, grief, anger and hatred, and commit them into God's hands, who accepts them and comforts them. Singing is spiritual as well as therapeutic. We have a choir that makes a joyful noise to God and expresses our thanks for God's abundant grace. A few local church choir members participate to support them vocally, thanks to the leaders, the Reverend and Dr. Stohs. In fact, singing has been serving as a direct line for some to healing and salvation. Local churches have invited our choir to sing so that we may bless each other by sharing our God-given grace. Elsewhere, I have written

concerning what positive psychology reports about the tremendous healing effect of singing: to see these comments, refer to The Church of Mary Magdalene, No 61, page.165 (under "Music").

Weekly Bible Study: The Nest Mission bible study group has been meeting at the library, local parks in the summer and now at Subway sandwich shop. It serves as a group therapy session for the participants as they reflect the bible messages into their troubled life, and try to find new ways to live life. It is also a time to learn how to pray and pray for each other. Therefore, the bible study places them on the road to restoration and salvation from their broken lives. I used to buy a good bible for the faithful ones to keep them in their backpack. Let the words of God be closer to their heart and remind them that they are not alone in this world. God is with them.

Christmas Gift of Motel Rooms: Christmas season is the loneliest time, especially for homeless people. For Christmas, few of them have a family to go to or are invited by anyone. To remember the baby Jesus born homeless in a manger, and also to celebrate his birth, we offer the gift of motel rooms for two or three nights on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and the day after Christmas, with clean underwear, a gift package, and meals, so that for them, because of Jesus, "there will be a room in the inn" (in contrast to Luke 2:7). For 2011 and 2012 Christmas the Korean Community Church partnered with us and made the gift of 3 nights possible. Praise the Lord!! Some of our homeless were full of tears and asked, "How is this happening? It is the best Christmas gift I have ever received!" Another homeless woman said in tears, "My own family wouldn't let me in their warm house; you foreigners offer me a Christmas room? How is this gift possible," she sobbed. One Christmas the "King5" (Channel 5, NBC) TV crew came out to see these things happening, and broadcast a story under the theme, "There is a room in the inn tonight."

Crisis Intervention and Case Management Services: My many years of experience in licensed social work and mental health has come in handy in dealing with crises and case management. People having crises are referred to us by community churches and agencies. In the Tacoma area, Rev. Kyung Lee responds, and in the Lynnwood/ Edmonds area, I also respond. Following are a few examples:

- 1) One day a few men sleeping at camp called me to report that their tent leaked and flooded. I had to put them in motel rooms, and helped them to obtain dry bedding. I bought them carts, heavy, durable sleeping bags, and a tarp to secure their tent in the rain. We were all wet walking. We rushed into the QFC grocery store and warmed up with fried chicken and hot coffee. Of course, we had to replace all that they lost in the flood.
- 2) One evening, a family of six, with four young children, walked into our Friday dinner reporting that they were sleeping in a van full of household stuff. I put them in a motel room. Within a week, the mother got a job at Sears. Within

three weeks the father got a job at a restaurant. I wished all homeless people could find a job this fast!!

- 3) One cold night, on the street, I ran into a homeless man walking, limping and pushing a shopping cart. I took him to a warm teriyaki restaurant, and bought him a warm dinner. Then I took him to a motel until his SSI check came. He had a son who appeared to have abandoned him. I called him many times many days with no response.
- 4) One man who was sleeping in his car, but his car broke down on a church parking lot. They kept it quiet for a few days, but requested that he move it away. He had no money to tow it, and no place to tow it to. I contacted a friend of mine who owns an auto repair shop. He towed it and fixed it not charging them for labor. I had to raise funds to pay for the parts through area churches.

Hungry for Work/Job Search: Many of our members are being laid off, but are eager to work. Still, there is no job for them. I cried out to some friends and churches. Some allowed us to do a yard sale on the church parking lot. Churches and individuals gave us items to sell. Some gave them work. I took them to work and stayed with them monitoring their work – washing windows, yard work, painting, or moving. The Nest Mission paid all the necessary expenses for them. The entire earning was given to the workers. Since they had no cash at all in their pockets, the earning was very helpful to meet their critical needs; those who were sleeping in cars were able to pay for the car insurance, gas and tabs; those who slept outside were able to pay for cell phones, phone bills, bus passes, sleeping bags, and warm food. We thank God for those God-sent-angels who offered them jobs!

In this day and age, it has been very hard for them to find full time jobs without particular skills or higher education. Part-time or odd jobs can never support them at the self-sufficient level. It is hard to see their homeless condition perpetuate. Our vision is to secure space, offer jobs/skill training, and provide avenues to education.

CSW Group Formed: Support, Teach, Encourage, Empower, Guide.
CSW stands for “College, Sobriety, Work,” for those who want to go to college, those who want to maintain sobriety, and those who want to find work. Since the Nest Mission has a goal to end homelessness, we formed a group with those who had a dream in these three areas. We meet with them on a weekly basis at a restaurant over meals, in order to provide a way for them to check in, and report on their progress. We also counseled, gave support, and provided further assistance and encouragement to carry out their dreams. We are seeing some fruits with those who stopped drinking, got into community college and found permanent jobs. Some of them accomplished these successes while sleeping at a Tent City and finding permanent housing. We also receive calls from individual small contractors – usually our friends, and send our homeless participants to work for individuals in their homes or for businesses, doing repairing and cleaning jobs, painting or moving.

Outreach: We do frequent outreach to meet our homeless members in the community – where they “hang out” – at the library, other meal program sites, and occasionally get together over meals at different restaurants. Meeting them in the community with more time to listen and talk is very important because then we can really share in-depth conversations as to their circumstances and needs. It is also a good way of building close relationships with them.

It is not uncommon, when churches offer meals to homeless people, to hand out plates without an intentional effort in the direction of meaningful conversation; under these circumstances, the homeless wouldn't know they were guests at all. Therefore, many meal offerings can be meaningless, falling short of meeting many true needs, except filling up a hungry stomach. We believe that there are too many churches catering food to where homeless hang out, without meeting needs in a meaningful way. This may result in redundant services, provided by different groups, which can waste resources and time. Therefore, we need to ask “What is that **they** need the most,” and not “What do **I** need to do for them,” without knowing what their needs are. I heard that in one city too many groups offer food on the same block, on the same day, often at the same time; the homeless receive more than one dish, and then throw away the less favorable dishes into a trash bin. Many feeding programs become directed toward satisfying the groups' egos, offering meals rather than meeting the needs of the homeless.

Summer Retreat: To develop leadership and nurture homeless persons spiritually, every summer we take half a dozen persons to a retreat for three days. Through singing, prayer, worship, sharing, special lectures, Bible study, book reviews, and special testimonies of outsiders, all participants, including Nest Mission leadership, have had life-changing experiences. A few homeless leaders were born out of such an event. We encouraged them to grow and mature and be leaders of our mission and in society, and to put their life under their own good control. After all, it is their mission. They need to be servers/leaders not just receivers all the time.

Annual Benefit Banquet: We hold an annual fund-raising banquet in November, the Thanksgiving season, when we thank God for His abundant blessings which motivate us to share with the poor around us. We invite our past, current and future supporters to thank them, as well as to encourage and invite them to be new supporters for the Nest Mission. The Women's Association of Pyung An Presbyterian Church prepares a literal feast for the event every year. Every participant enjoys this feast so much. We invite our past rent recipients to come to the feast and to give testimonies on how our rental assistance helped them. We also invite new recipients to come and receive rental assistance and share their stories. Several regular Nest Mission members also share their experience in worship, Bible study, the CSW group work, retreat and other events, activities and projects. We have watched them move and inspire the hearts of the other participants. Several individual or group singing teams along with our Nest Mission Choir are invited to lead worship, inspire, and entertain all who attend that evening. These singers shake the souls of the participants. The funds collected that evening and throughout the year support this mission. Most

supporters who participate in this event are Korean-Americans and most rent recipients are non-Koreans. This event shows and proves that the service of the Nest Mission breaks and crosses all the cultural, racial, ethnic, and language barriers, and that it is everyone's mission.

Laundry Day: For a few of the Nest Mission's leaders team laundry vouchers are offered - \$2.75 to wash one load of clothes and \$6.00 to wash one load of a sleeping bag. Currently, our funds do not allow us to purchase vouchers for every needy person. This might be a project we need to expand in the future. We made a contract with a local Laundromat for our voucher holders to do laundry on Fridays. As they accumulate our vouchers we pay them accordingly

Birthday Celebrations: Many of our homeless friends are not in contact with families. Oftentimes families do not know where they are. Of course, their birthdays are remembered by very few people including themselves. So at the first Friday dinner of each month we celebrate birthdays of the month with cakes and gifts. Often, however, they forget even their own birthdays.

We Offer Certificates for Community Service for youth volunteers and for court-referred cases, in which community service is required as a part of court stipulations.

Networking: We work with area churches and agencies in a close network, and support one another. In crises we refer clients to each other or help each other to solve the crisis at hand for homeless men and women.

Homeless Friends Who Broke My Heart: Since we began there have been many homeless people; their circumstances have broken my heart. Following are some situations:

- 1) I had a white sister who used to be a nurse; she was sick with schizophrenia, washing her hands and face until they bled. She used too much toilet paper to wipe her hands and face that it used to clog toilet. When this happened, in the first phase of our ministry when we weren't prepared, I had to put my hand into the toilet to pull it out.
- 2) Another white sister who attended seminary full-time for three years. She showed me her school transcript. She was so sick with paranoid schizophrenia but wouldn't take medication and always displayed bizarre behavior – in this case, by putting coins in her coffee. She couldn't even read a few sentences of Bible verses in our worship because she was so disorganized. Had she been healthy, she could have been in my position of being a pastor and leading the ministry.
- 3) Two men who were addicted to alcohol and refused to be treated, refused to accept a protective payee for their checks, and were often robbed and

beaten. Both of them were found dead in parks leaving us with a lot of sorrow and guilt for not being able to help them.

All of these situations broke my heart. The people had nothing to do with being lazy, or “lazy stuff” we usually blame. They didn’t choose their illness. Therefore, I look at the homelessness issue from a systemic, social, economic, political, policy, and cultural perspective: Economic policy results in a gap which is too deep and wide between the rich and poor; tax policy, housing policy, and minimum wages which are too low, and on which no one can make a living; lack of low income housing, slashing of employment opportunities and government aid; feminization of poverty, racism, substance abuse/mental illness, and ex-prisoners being discharged into the community but into an environment with a lack of treatment and no job training or jobs and housing options; individualism and cultural biases that value human beings on the basis of income and success – all of these become the root causes of homelessness rather than laziness causing homelessness (for more detail, see *People in Purple*, vol. 1).