

## **Story, Scripture & reflection questions for worship on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

For March 14<sup>th</sup> worship, you will need to be familiar with the true story and articles shared below. We will have a sermon/study time in worship that uses this story, and the two fictional stories *"Susie's Home on the Grand"* and *"Two Guys in the Attic"*. Please read carefully, and answer the reflection questions so that you can be prepared to participate next Sunday.

### **"Before and After "Housing First:" the fall and rise of Joe Hatch"**

"I weighed 125 pounds before I got into housing," says Joe Hatch, a participant in the At Home study in Winnipeg. "But as soon as I had an apartment, my health improved dramatically." Hatch, who has a B.A. in sociology, was working at the University of Winnipeg in the late 1990s when he began to experience panic attacks. "I was diagnosed with anxiety and prescribed Paxil, but that wasn't the right diagnosis or medication." Hatch had begun a 12-year downward spiral. "I struggled with depression for years until, after taking Paxil for too long, I went into mania and started doing things that were totally out of character for me. I became suicidal and violent."

Losing both his marriage and his job, Hatch was eventually obliged to move out of his apartment. "I was living on disability checks and I couldn't find another apartment that I could afford so I landed on a friend's couch. But I couldn't do that forever, it's asking too much of a friendship, so I ended up on the street." And from the street he wound up in jail. "There are a lot of things I don't remember from those twelve years. Especially when I was in mania. The police say that I was breaking things, breaking windows. I don't remember that."

In retrospect, says Hatch, getting arrested may have been the best thing that could have happened because it led to a stint in a psychiatric hospital. There, he received a new diagnosis – bipolar disorder. And with the new diagnosis, new medication. Since then, life has been steadily improving for Hatch. "You have to catch a couple of breaks somewhere, and the biggest break for me was getting a chance to participate in the At Home/Chez Soi study." Through the study, Hatch found housing in 2010 and, eventually, work. Now, two years on, he's a Peer Organizer with the study and does research for the University of Winnipeg's Institute of Urban Studies. If the At Home project has a success story – Joe Hatch is it.

The above article was taken from:

<https://www.ighhub.org/resource/and-after-%E2%80%9Chousing-first%E2%80%9D-fall-and-rise-joe-hatch>

### **CBC reported on the "Housing First" research project:**

New research has found it's cheaper for governments to house homeless people with mental illnesses rather than pay for the problems associated with homelessness – including health care, policing and temporary shelters. The research findings come from a \$110-million study started in 2008 in five Canadian cities – including Winnipeg. The Mental Health Commission of Canada used a federal grant to see if a "housing first" approach to homelessness and mental illness was a good way of transitioning people off of the streets. It was the largest research study in the world targeting homelessness and mental health. Essentially, the program, dubbed At Home, found housing for the homeless and mentally ill.

Winnipeg's Joe Hatch was one of them .... the results of the four-year study were released confirming that putting a roof over someone's head helped them work through mental illness and kept them off the street long-term. With more than 2,000 participants in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Moncton, researchers said they found the program not only found the housing-first approach worked at keeping people off the street, but it also cost taxpayers less. Researchers found for every \$10 spent on a housing-first approach, taxpayers saved \$21.72 on other services.

The above quotes taken from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/housing-mentally-ill-homeless-cheaper-than-alternative-study-1.2603135>

## John 8:7

When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." [NRSV]

### Questions for Reflection:

1. In the first two stories you were provided, "*Susie's Home on the Grand*" and "*Two Guys in the Attic*", you encountered Susie, Treesey and Joe. In the articles above you encounter Joe Hatch. How do you encounter their decision-making when they found themselves homeless? Does your compassion and/or judgment of the characters depend on the decisions they made about how to deal with their homelessness? Does your compassion and/or judgment depend on the circumstances that brought them to finding themselves homeless?
2. Would you say the individuals in the stories are responsible for their circumstances of homelessness? How do you come to your conclusion?
3. In John 8, a story is told about Jesus teaching in the temple. In order to test Jesus, the scribes and pharisees bring a woman who is caught in the act of adultery before him. They cite Mosaic law (the law given to Moses) saying the law says a woman like this should be stoned. They ask Jesus what he says. He replies with the invitation to them "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." How do you understand his reply?
4. Do you believe God calls us to cast judgment on those whose circumstances are different from our own? Or their decision making? Do you believe God wants our responses of love to be based on our judgments or God's command to love each other as Jesus has loved us?
5. When you consider the scriptures and God's call on us to love each other, does it change in any way how you may differently think of the characters: Susie, Treesey & Joe, Joe Hatch?