

From Richard Rolke (Past Trinity Board Chair)

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Tia and Jonny.

Life hasn't been easy for them, either through bad choices or simply circumstances around them. They wrestle with demons and turn to what ever may help dull the pain.

But while the journey has been rough, there's openness, vulnerability, compassion and warmth.

They speak of sharing a shirt with someone in need even though they are living rough behind the church and struggling to stay fed. Long abandoned cigarette butts are cleaned up and when there's a perceived risk to Trinity, they call the authorities. Our staff and volunteers are treated with respect – friends, not adversaries.

Jonny apologizes for showing up late, even though he has just been up for a few short hours after making a few bucks in a local restaurant late at night. He is worried that he has inconvenienced us.

Tia doesn't glorify her life but she doesn't shy away from the dark and painful details – leaving home at 13 with limited education and often faced with extreme options to survive. Despite all of this, she writes and shares her story.

Drugs dominate their lives, they admit that, even to the pointing of consuming limited resources for food and shelter. They talk of perhaps one day getting clean and severing the grip of addiction.

They are proud. They don't want to rely on others. But they are scared – scared of being outside as the temperature drops, particularly as Jonny faces uncertainty around health issues that have led to the hospital. Even with Tia's disability pension and Jonny's odd jobs, there isn't enough cash to pay the hotel.

As I listen to them, stereotypes arise from deep inside of me – street entrenched, addicts, “those people.” My selfish voice points out that I've also faced hardship and pain, and managed to keep a roof over my head. But another voice shoves the first aside and reminds me that I have benefitted from the generosity and caring of others, and if it wasn't for them, I may not be here today.

I also begin to think of a close relative who was loving and gentle and full of so much potential, but he couldn't escape the power of addiction. His loss shattered our family, and I often think of what things would be like if he were here today.

I am reminded of how Jesus associated with those deemed undesirable - the adulterer, the tax collector. He found value in those around them and embraced them as his own.

Tia and Jonny are valued. They are important. They are loved. They have fought darkness and they are still here.

I know we can't solve all of Tia and Johnny's challenges overnight or that the road ahead will be easy, but they are us and we are them. I am willing to try and help them navigate this journey, even for just the short-term. Will you join me?