

January 10, 2025



This weekend we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord and hear the words from the prophet Isaiah in chapter 43:

1b “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are mine.
2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you,
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.

Sometimes passages can be challenging to hear as wildfires currently sweep across Los Angeles.

I received a call from Rev. Dr. Amy Jacober this week. She was in tears.

Amy was a caretaker and POA for an elderly gentleman named Mr. Vash. Amy lived with Mr. and Mrs. Vash when she lived in LA as a PhD student. Amy became part of their family and as they aged, she took care of all their finances, and made sure they were cared for in their old age. Mr. Vash died about 5 years ago and left his house in Altadena to Amy.

You will remember that Pastor Amy has led Adult Education for us, previously a series on Disability and the Church and more recently the Fall series on the Prophetic Lament. Two summers ago her youth group from Phoenix stayed at Faith and worked with our ministry partners here in Seattle, learning and serving. This past July, Amy and her family visited Seattle.

While here she joined me for a conversation sermon one Sunday. Though she lives and serves a church in Phoenix, she's like an extended part of the Faith family.

Amy, in true form, used the house as an extension of ministry. The area in which the house stood was in a uniquely diverse area, in a neighborhood that over the decades was known for being a safe place for people of color, LGBTQIA+, lower income, immigrants, and more. She wanted to keep the property in the spirit of Mr. and Mrs. Nash, a spirit of generosity, welcome, and inclusivity. It was not a super posh house, but it was cozy and accessible. At the time when the house burned, eleven people lived in the two structures of the house. She charged the minimum it cost to pay the mortgage and utilities. Nothing more. The people who lived there were immigrants and refugees. It was a safe place for people to live, contribute, and serve.

When Amy called in tears she didn't speak of losing the property. She didn't speak of losing their retirement plan and future financial stability, which that house was supposed to be one day. The first thing she said was, "This is how I helped people. How am I supposed to help people now?"

I invited Pastor Amy to join in on Friday Fellowship via Zoom to share her story. As she said, it is just one small story of many.

We live in a hard world. There is a big struggle to be human and to experience the destruction and fear that occurs. We have one another. We sit with each other, care for one another. You are not alone. We are not alone. When we walk through fire, and though what is around may burn, the love and care for others cannot and will not burn. It will absorb that fire and bring even brighter the light of Christ. We band together. We walk together.

Pastor Shannyn

Where the house stood. The tree in front is a grapefruit tree.



