

I only find myself in Cambridge on Sunday mornings about once a month these days. On the morning of the fire, I was singing a service at Christ Church around the corner on Garden Street. It is not unusual to hear sirens occasionally during services, but that morning they kept getting progressively louder and more numerous. It became clear that something unusual was happening, and near the end of the service the priest said a prayer for whoever was affected by the fire. I had no idea it would be me.

When the service ended and the doors opened, smoke wafted in. As I walked outside, someone said the Mormon church on Brattle Street had burned down. We rushed over to the smoldering ruins of the church and watched for several hours as the firefighters worked to put out the blaze. It was strange to see water pouring into the charred remains of the chapel, to see the collapsed roof beams littering the gym, flames flickering along the rose window, and to see the upstairs hallway illuminated with bright sunlight, no longer shielded by a roof.

Several neighbors and ministers of neighborhood churches stopped by to talk. One remarked how horrible it was to see a place of gentleness consumed in such a violent manner. We moved around to the front of the building and watched the firefighters start to wind things down. Ward members had lined up and were busy pulling as many books as possible out of the library, which is now downstairs where the mission office used to be. There was a touching moment as two firefighters carried a large portrait of Jesus ministering to the rich man out of the front door of the church.

I am glad that fate found me up in Cambridge the morning of the fire, and that I had a chance to say good-bye to the building that has meant so much to me over the years.

Anchored with Meaning—Mary B. Johnston

This church building has heard so many songs and souls. It has witnessed so much painful and redemptive spiritual journeying. Freud and Darwin were welcomed right along with the Three Witnesses. In the chapel I sang “Amazing Grace” Aretha Franklin-style while Brandon Ingersoll accompanied me on guitar.

I met so many dear friends in this building—worshipping, praying, dancing, doubting, loving . . . I cannot think of a build-