

Theme 8: Recovery is not linear

Recovery is uneven and experienced differently across individuals.

Reminders of what was lost

That's when we saw the whole effect of the thing... you see if you walk in the neighborhood, you will see these blank stains. These were the trash cans. Because it was trash day on Monday. And you still see the residues of the melted plastic. And of course, the county hasn't done anything to repair the streets or anything. So, that's like a constant reminder that you know, something happen, something bad happened. You know, it's just one of those things that you, if you leave now you don't want to even take a walk. Now it's a wonderful neighborhood because everything is new. But we lost that feeling.



Sonoma County

Recovery can be isolating and painful

Physically, we are in a new community... and now we are in this community where we're working to try to make it safer... It's really interesting because after the fire, we all came together, and we would meet for breakfast. We were kind of cheerleaders for each other to take this on and rebuild. **And then when we said that we were going to move, it was like we had turned our backs on them. I felt like they were angry.** A couple of times I tried to reach out and talk to a couple of the wives and they just shut me down. So that felt kind of hurtful...



Sonoma County

Anxiety about the future



We've been there since 98. But it's a struggle and it's still a struggle today. **I thought that I would be there for the rest of my life, and every time that there fires it's a trigger, and I'm now telling my husband like, it's cool when our kids are gone, let's think about living in a town.** Cause I don't think I can be evacuated again year, after year, after year. Even though I'm fairly certain that we have done our due diligence to

build our house as safely as possible... I believe in the fire codes, but I just, it's triggering.

Butte County



Well, I feel like the fact that I was insured and **I was able to relocate soon was a really good part of my recovery because I was able to move to a location where I was not reminded daily of the dead, standing, dying, blackened trees and the horrendous landscape** that showed the effects and the scars. So, I was able to move to a place with green trees and that was great for my mental health. I think I would say.

Butte County



I needed a temporary permit to live in a trailer. And I was kind of just trying to keep a foothold, like to show that I wanted to be here so that I could rebuild. **I didn't really want to be here mostly, if I'm honest. But yeah, I felt, like I said, like I had no other choice. And I always feel like I went against my intuition really.** My intuition was to start over somewhere else. Like the spirit part of me wanted to be

free And coming back is like tethering yourself to a spot that already hurt. Just like you're always going to be reminded. And when I did come back, I was like visceral just because, it's like you can't even compete. Like I forget that I'm in the same spot sometimes. And then I remember like in my mind, I'm there in the old house and then I'm like, wait, that's right here. The front door was probably right here. But it's weird.

Lake County

Finding the road to recovery



Calculations, Spreadsheets and more spreadsheets

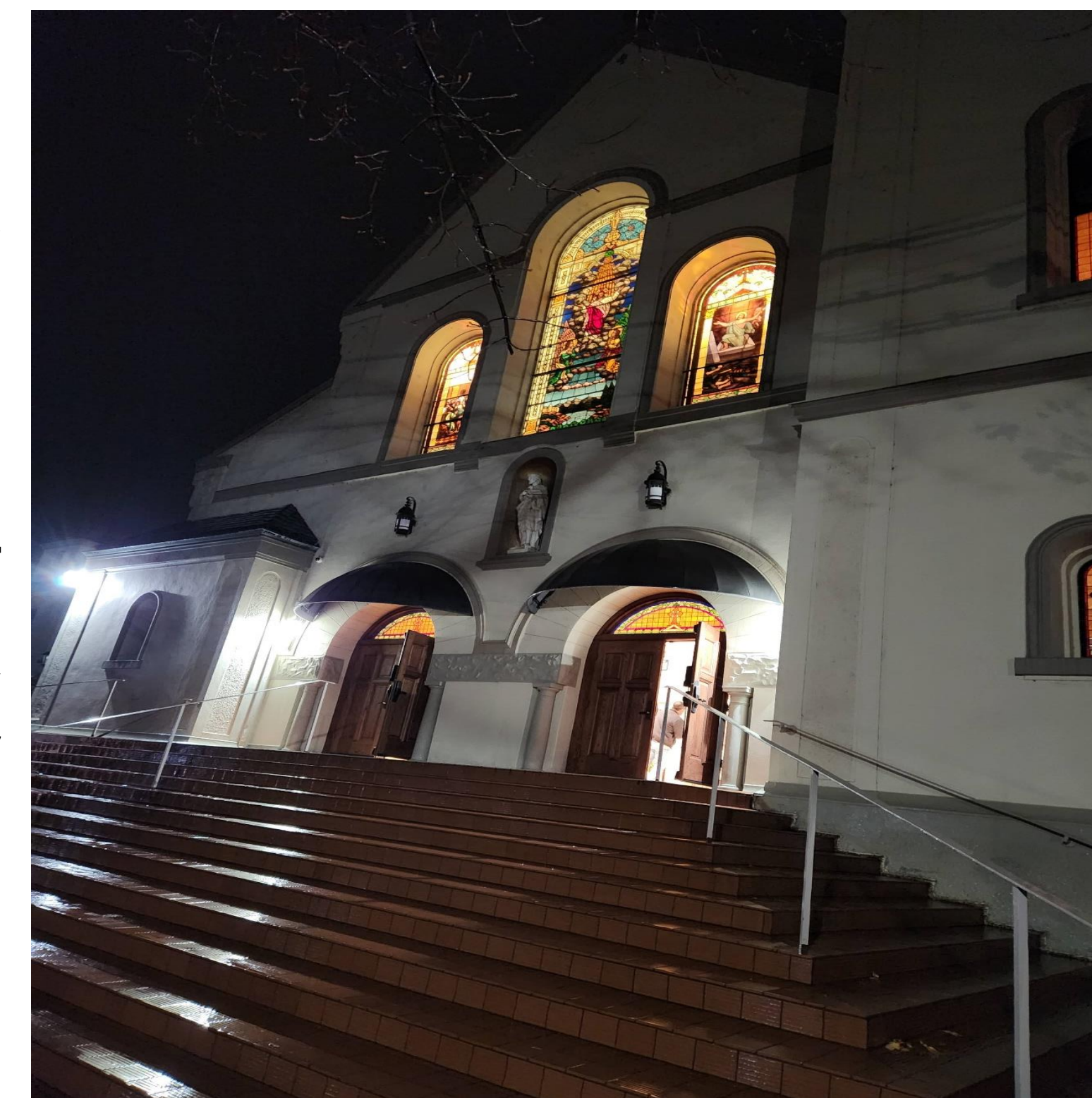
We made the right choice because it would never be the same, but as time goes by the good times start calling me back. If only I were 50 instead of 74.

To look forward to, and then try and figure out how to get there. And that takes a little bit of thinking. But once you start to see maybe that's not where you're going to get and you're going to get somewhere else. But once you have that, you have a direction. And now you have hope. And if you don't have that, it's all despair. And it's hard to convey to people how to do that... And I know it's hard because of the despair and everything, **but somewhere there's a path you're going to go to try and go forward.** And you got to find that as fast as you can so that you have something to keep working on.

Butte County

We don't typically hang out with other survivors. Because... there's just a lot of emotional downloading and I can really only hold mine and my kids effectively... So, we don't hang out with them anymore. I know. It's terrible. I'm like, I don't know, but I just can't handle it... **I don't have it to give anymore. And I realized I've been giving to so many people trying to backfill all their trauma. I pulled away from all the trauma therapy I was doing at the time.** I just went back and, like I don't wanna deal with trauma anymore. I think I've had enough that's, that'll do.

Butte County



[New neighbors not taking steps to reduce fire risk] I totally attribute to the fact that **they weren't here during the fire. Their eyes are closed. They think the fire: what they think is that the fire already burned through here. It won't come again.** Because we were told at the beginning it was a 50-year fire, right? That's what we were told. Well, two years later there was another one. A year after that there was another one. We had five 50-year fires. I mean, **at some point, you know, you got to stop thinking this is a 50-year fire.** I think that they have young kids, I think they're busy in life and where I was. Unless it happens to you, you don't [get it].

Sonoma County



So, if a young couple comes to me and says, 'oh, should we build', I would encourage them to build. Yes. You know, just go to the center in Paradise, make sure you've got the right contractor and all of that... Now if my daughter says we want to rebuild up there, I go, 'no, you're not. No.'. So it depends on who asks... **I mean maybe someday my granddaughter, my grandchildren maybe, you know, will be able to move up here, but right now I don't want my kids up here. It's ugly. It's awful up here. But I want my community to grow.**

Butte County