

## **Neighbours sharing with Neighbours – Territory BC Disaster Fund**

Some reflections after the flooding in Merritt:  
by The Rev Canon Isabel C. Healy-Morrow  
Incumbent St Michael's Merritt

Dear Friends:

Our minds have been stunned and all our hearts ache at the photos and videos circulating on the news broadcasts and on social media, with the devastation in Merritt and the Nicola Valley, as well as in the Fraser Canyon and the Abbotsford area. The sudden flooding and resultant severe damages have been a sharp reminder of how quickly life can change, and how climate change is affecting us all.

On November 11<sup>th</sup>, I officiated at the Remembrance Day service in Merritt at the cenotaph downtown, located by City Hall. Even though it was a somber occasion, there was a strong sense of community as we came together on a bright sunny morning to honour Canada's fallen. During the ceremony, a dozen beautiful pure white doves were released to symbolize peace and hope for a better future.

Although the event was carefully organized with Covid restrictions in place, there was good attendance by community members, many with their children. There was a sense that after nearly two years of battling a horrible virus, and the destruction of the wildfires in the summer, things were somehow slowly getting back to normal, and important events like Remembrance Day could still take place.

And then – four days later – the skies opened, and we received the impact of a huge storm – an “atmospheric river”, that swept away highways, bridges, homes, vehicles with people in them, precious livestock, and caused the evacuation of an entire city. We are still trying to make some sense of it all, and come to grips with the effects, both short term and long term, of the destruction. Even though we had listened to the weather reports, no one was prepared for the level of damage that occurred.

I spent this past weekend talking to people who have suffered great losses due to the flooding. One lady has lost her small rental home and is completely overwhelmed mentally to the point where she cannot speak. Others are grieving the loss of precious items such as wedding photos, ashes of loved ones, family heirlooms, and irreplaceable mementos.

Families are struggling to maintain daily routines from hotel rooms and billets in other cities, trying to feed their children and get them to an unfamiliar school so some semblance of daily routine can be maintained. Everyone is yearning to “go home”, but not sure if their home is safe to go to. The clean-up operations will be immense and take months.

In the midst of all this, what are we called to do as Christians, as people who walk in “the Jesus way”?

We are being called to action, in whatever expression the Holy Spirit suggests to our hearts. That may mean volunteering, donating money for families and individuals who have been left homeless, and praying for those who have been evacuated, those who have suffered great

losses, and for the safety and strength of first responders, all those involved in remediation efforts, members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have been sent to help, and for wisdom for our leaders in government.

If you are able to assist in this great effort, please consider making a donation to the Territory of the People, BC Disaster Fund. Cheques may be sent to 360 Nicola Street, Kamloops, BC V2C 2P5.

**Please make the cheques payable to Territory of the People, and memo BC Disaster Fund.**