

## **THE MON VALLEY MISSION INITIATIVE**

On September 13, 2017, when Mon Valley Missioners met at St. Stephen's, McKeesport, to participate in a healing service and discussion, we were pleasantly surprised to be joined there by over twenty members of neighboring Bethlehem Baptist Church (BBC). Sensing the Holy Spirit at work on that evening, we made the burgeoning partnership between St. Stephen's and BBC the focus of the Mon Valley Mission in late 2017 and through 2018. The partnership has grown and strengthened under the joint leadership of Deacon Brandon Mozingo and BBC's Reverend Cheryl Coleman. On the first Monday of each month, members of both congregations, and some from our other Mon Valley parishes, gather for worship, prayer, discussion, and a shared meal, with an eye toward discerning together God's will for Christ's Church in the Mon Valley.

While the monthly gatherings in McKeesport will continue, beginning this fall we will also be working to encourage greater cooperation, sharing, and support among our clergy throughout the Mon Valley. The clergy will meet regularly to discuss their Ministry in the Mon, the difficulties that they encounter, and the opportunities present. We are hopeful that, with God's help, new ideas and energy will emerge.

Other highlights from the Mon Valley Mission in 2018 include:

- St. John's, Donora, has grown under the leadership of pastoral associate Michael Singer, and has been renovating the building and reaching out to the community.
- St. Paul's, Monongahela, has moved to two evening services, one (traditional) on Saturday and one (contemporary) on Sunday, as a way of reaching others in the community for whom attending a Sunday morning service is not feasible. They are also exploring the possibility of converting some of their building's extra space into a recovery home for those suffering amidst the opioid epidemic.
- Church of the Good Shepherd, Hazelwood, is looking into the future and discerning their mission after the retirement of its long-time pastor, Fr. Huett Fleming.

Please keep the Mon Valley Mission in your prayers in the year ahead.

In Christ,

The Rev. Canon Dr. Jay Geisler, Chaplain to the Mon Valley Mission Initiative  
Kimberly Karashin, Canon for Mission