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Episcopal program focuses on helping people with addictions

By MICKEY POWELL The Winchester Star

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WINCHESTER — A program planned next weekend is aimed at helping religious congregations reach out to members struggling to overcome substance addictions.

“Congregational Care for Addiction” will be held from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at Christ Episcopal Church on West Boscawen Street in Winchester. It is sponsored the Winchester Region of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. However, it is open to clergy and worshipers from congregations of all denominations, said the Rev. Matt Rhodes, rector of the Cunningham Chapel Parish and Christ Church in Millwood who is involved in the project.

According to Rhodes, many people worldwide — including ones in the Shenandoah Valley — suffer from addictions or they are in recovery efforts. Yet while there are many organizations and programs designed to help those battling addictions, churches and their congregations may not know about all of the resources.

Congregations and their clergy periodically realize or find out that someone among them has an addiction or is in recovery, Rhodes said. And, amid a nationwide opioid drug addiction crisis, those situations are “becoming much more prevalent” and likely to continue increasing, he said.

“One of the hardest things you can do,” Rhodes said, “is take the first step and ask someone for help” in ending an addiction.

When people seek help, often they first approach their churches or other faith-based groups in which they are involved, he said.

“A lot of times, we’re the only sense of community or family that a person has,” Rhodes continued. “So it’s incumbent for us to take care of one another.”

Saturday's program will include presentations on addiction and recovery support and "lay the foundation for individual parishes (and other groups) to begin discerning how they might best equip themselves to walk this journey with those suffering with addiction, as well as (with) their friends and loved ones," he said.

People recovering from addiction who are part of religious congregations are welcome to attend, he added.

Anyone wanting to attend is asked to register online at winchesterregionepiscopal@gmail.com by May 15.

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