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Feeling blue this Christmas? Millwood church has a worship service for you

By CATHY KUEHNER | The Winchester Star
Dec 17, 2017

MILLWOOD — The pastor of a small, country church is working on a special service for those who are not feeling joyful and festive this holiday season

“Putting on your shoes and coat is the first step,” said Matt Rhodes, priest-in-charge at Christ Episcopal Church. “You will be welcomed when you arrive here.”

Rhodes invites anyone who is experiencing loss, grief or depression to a Blue Christmas service at 7 p.m. Thursday. Christ Church is located at 809 Bishop Meade Road in the Millwood community in Clarke County.

“There is so much focus on shopping, parties, families and traveling at this time of year, and those are all wonderful things,” Rhodes said. “But, a lot of people have problems with family, are suffering loss or are battling depression. This is a very different time for them.”

Rhodes said most liturgies are about the joyful birth of Christ. Little exists for people who are not experiencing joy during Christmas. However, such liturgies are being developed.

For the Blue Christmas service on Thursday, Rhodes is using a liturgy developed by a church in Atlanta, which gave him permission to use it.

Rhodes understands that when a person is feeling blue, finding the energy to leave the house is a struggle, and the uncertainty of what to expect is reason enough to stay home.

“Christ Church is a safe space. Participate or sit in silence,” he said. “This is a time of community, and we want you to know you are not forgotten. We don’t know any strangers at Christ Church.”

Rhodes graduated from Virginia Theological Seminary in May and was named deacon-in-charge at Christ Church in mid-June. He was ordained priest-in-charge on Dec. 9.

“It’s such a privilege to serve at Christ Church,” he said.

Learn more about Christ Church at cunninghamchapel.org. Call 540-837-1112.

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