

# Collins Chapel reopens as recuperative care center, family inn for people who are homeless

[Katherine Burgess](#) Memphis Commercial Appeal

The hospital once was one of the few places that offered care to African Americans during segregation.

Now, it will be the only recuperative care center for people experiencing homelessness in the region.

“A location just like this one has been a dream for the most vulnerable and those we have served. In this space, many medically fragile unsheltered Memphians will no longer recover from their illness on the street,” said The Rev. Lisa Anderson, executive director of Room in the Inn – Memphis.

In a separate wing, a Family Inn will offer housing to families in a rapid rehousing program, offering them “hospitality and hope” as they work toward living in permanent housing, Anderson said.

The reopening of Collins Chapel Connectional Hospital has been years in the making.

Built in 1910 by the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the hospital admitted African Americans during segregation and also offered a space for black doctors and nurses to practice.

Desegregation left the hospital and attached clinic closed in 1954, but the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church has long sought to renovate the space and looked for a partner to fill its rooms.

Now, it has found one in Room in the Inn - Memphis.

The two-story former hospital, which is 16,750 square feet, reopened Monday after a roughly \$5 million renovation.

The recuperative care center will have 21 beds, with both private and double rooms. It includes common areas for residents to spend time or to participate in group therapy.

Six people are currently in recuperative therapy housed at Travelodge and will soon come to Collins Chapel. Room in the Inn staff have also already been in conversation with families who will take up housing in the Family Inn wing.

There are 14 rooms in the Family Inn wing, along with a spacious parent's room where parenting classes can be held or parents can simply spend time together. There also is a children's room packed with toddler's toys and books and a learning laboratory for children who are in school.

“This will be a time of civility where families can have breathing space to take advantage of support as they move from homelessness to housing with the help of MIFA,” Anderson said.

Once bare hallways have been reworked in creams and light turquoise and the rooms are made up with comfortable couches, blankets and thick carpets.

Bishop Henry M. Williamson Sr., the presiding prelate of the first district of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, said seeing Collins Chapel Connectional Hospital opening once again, and seeing the partnership with Room in the Inn was a "miracle" put together by God — but also by hard work.

“We wanted this historic Black hospital to serve the needs of the community,” Williamson said. “Now who could do it better than serving the needs of the homeless? Children, men, women, all races, all cultures. A perfect match right here in this Bible.”

The former hospital reopened Monday with a ribbon cutting and tours of the facility.

"This project is not just filling one of the gaps and providing care to those experiencing homelessness, but it is also a true testament of what can be accomplished together in partnership," said Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland.

Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris joked that he didn't know how much money the county had put into the building, but that “whatever it was, it was well worth it.”

“This church and its leaders have been at the forefront of service of community and of healing,” Harris said. “We can’t have faith without health. Those things are tied together.”

*Katherine Burgess covers county government and religion. She can be reached at [katherine.burgess@commercialappeal.com](mailto:katherine.burgess@commercialappeal.com), 901-529-2799 or followed on Twitter @kathsburgess.*