

New MTMC blessed to bless community



JOHN A. GILLIS/DNJ

Hymns are sung Sunday at the MTMC Blessing and Dedication Service for the new hospital on Medical Center Parkway. The hospital is set to begin treating patients Saturday.

Dedication highlights mission as healing ministry



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Patient representative Debbie McGowan reads an intercession Sunday during the MTMC Blessing and Dedication Service.

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With the new hospital's official opening less than a week away, Middle Tennessee Medical Center officials hosted hundreds of community members Sunday for what many consider the most important event in celebration of the new facility — the blessing and dedication.

The \$267 million facility officially opens Saturday, replacing an aging facility near Murfreesboro's downtown with a modern regional medical center that plants another firm anchor in the burgeoning Gateway District on the city's west side.

"We have truly been blessed by this beautiful new facility," MTMC President and CEO Gordon

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Ferguson told the crowd of about 350 people gathered Sunday inside the big white tent near the hospital's entrance.

Filled with hymns, prayers and words of thanksgiving from local pastors and MTMC officials, the dedication service emphasized the hospital's overall mission and left no doubt as to its foundation.

"The facility is part of a healing ministry," said Mike Schatzlein, president and CEO of St. Thomas Health Services. MTMC is a part of St. Thomas Health Services and is owned by Ascension Health, the nation's largest not-for-profit Catholic health system.

At the service's outset, members of the MTMC Associate Advisory Council walked to the stage carrying banners displaying the hospital's core values: creativity, integrity, service to the poor, reverence, dedication and wisdom.

Licensed for 286 beds — the current site has 225 beds — the new MTMC will house patients in two five- and seven-story towers that can be expanded for future space needs in the 550,000-square-foot facility.

But speaker after speaker emphasized that it isn't the actual facility that matters most, but rather the service provided by those who work inside the faith-based institution.

In his invocation, the

Rev. James McCarroll of First Baptist Church on East Castle Street prayed that those in Murfreesboro and surrounding counties "will witness the love of God through the work of this hospital."

Said the Rev. Mark Sappenfield of Saint Rose Catholic Church: "Every individual healing at this facility will be a greater healing for the city of Murfreesboro and beyond."

The Rev. Mike Smith of First Baptist Church on East Main reminded the audience that "healing is work ... and takes sacrifice." But Jesus set the example, he said, showing that healing is "work and worship."

"See Jesus in those we heal."

— Jimmy Hart, 615-278-5150