

## Church Health sees growth with new Crosstown eye clinic

By [Aisling Mäki](#), Daily Memphian

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Jennie Robbins Chief Executive Officer of Church Health, speaks during the grand opening of its new eye clinic on the third floor at Crosstown Concourse. (Brad Vest/Special to The Daily Memphian)

Church Health on Wednesday, Nov. 20, unveiled its new eye-care clinic on the third floor of Crosstown Concourse, which will expand access to eye care for underserved Memphians.

The Church Health Eye Clinic will accommodate the growing number of uninsured and underinsured patients who seek care at Church Health, the nation's largest privately funded, faith-based health clinic.

"I don't know anything more biblical than what we're doing here," said [Dr. Scott Morris, the primary care doctor and pastor who founded Church Health in 1987](#) to serve the health care needs of Memphis' low-income residents.

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"We're taking an opportunity to provide vision for people who are poor, who are going blind. I believe that is what God has called us to do, and by God, we're going to do it for a long time to come," he said.

The Church Health Eye Clinic was previously housed on the second floor of Crosstown Concourse. That 450-square-foot space with four exam rooms will now be used for more specialized eye care.

Work began in January on the \$1.7 million expansion, funded by private donors, foundations and other organizations. It transformed unused office space on the third floor into a 1,200-square-foot clinic with 12 exam rooms.

The new clinic space features upgraded technology and is 30% larger than the previous space. Its staff of 12, including three eye doctors, can treat more community members who need eye care, including vision-preserving and vision-restoring services.

“With this clinic addition, we’re able to increase our overall impact by 30%, serve more patients, give more prescriptions, expand access to services that can really preserve and restore vision, and keep people working, living and thriving in our community,” said Dr. Kirsten McKnight, director of Church Health’s Eye Clinic.



[View Gallery](#)

As noted on the Church Health Eye Clinic’s new sign, it’s dedicated in honor of Dr. Chris Fleming, a longtime Memphis ophthalmologist and Church Health volunteer who was in attendance Wednesday night.

He became the nonprofit’s first eye doctor shortly after Morris founded it 37 years ago.

“When we first began, I started seeing patients that had eye problems,” Morris said. “As a family practitioner, that was above my pay grade, so I needed help.”

Fleming is one of many volunteer optometrists and ophthalmologists to offer services through the eye clinic, which sees upwards of 5,000 patients each year. They come from places like Hamilton Eye Institute, Memphis Eye & Cataract Associates and the University of Tennessee Health Science Center.

Memphis’ population has high rates of chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension and autoimmune conditions that can put people at risk for eye diseases.

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The Church Health Eye Clinic helps save patients' eyesight and helps them overcome the four major causes of blindness: diabetic retinopathy, cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration.

Church Health said its eye clinic is the only path for its uninsured and underserved patients to be treated for these ocular diseases.

“(We’re) taking care of more folks, really working through our integrated model of care to really heal the eye and to keep everybody happy and healthy in Memphis,” said [Jennie Robbins, CEO of Church Health.](#)

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Aisling Mäki has spent the better part of two decades writing about Memphis. A former digital journalist for WMC Action News 5 and staff reporter for Memphis Daily News, her work has also appeared in The Commercial Appeal, High Ground News, I Love Memphis, Inside Memphis Business, The Memphis Flyer, Memphis Parent, Memphis Magazine and Tri-State Defender.

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