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# New Noon Day facility opening

\$2M building, dubbed The Rock at Noon Day, is ‘a part of the community’

It’s being rebranded as The Rock at Noon Day — “Jesus Christ being ‘The Rock,’ ” says the Rev. Danny Whatley, director of Noon Day Ministries.



GREG SORBER/JOURNAL

**The Rev. Danny Whatley, director of The Rock at Noon Day, expects the ministry to open in its new location at 2400 Second NW on Tuesday. The new 15,500-square-foot building will house worship services, meals, a laundry, clothing exchange, showers and space for agencies that provide other services.**

But Noon Day is itself something of a rock in the community, having administered to the homeless and poor since it was founded in 1982.

This month, Whatley received the keys to Noon Day’s new building at 2400 Second NW, about two miles north of its soon-to-close facility behind the First Baptist Church at Broadway and Central Avenue.

The new steel building capped with a metal roof contains 15,500 square feet of space, making it a bit smaller than the old building, but better designed for its multiple purposes, Whatley said.

“We will be able to feed more people, be more efficient and be a part of the community,” he said.

The Rock at Noon Day is located along a portion of Second Street with retail and commercial businesses, though not far from the residents who make up the near North Valley neighborhood. Many in the neighborhood live in rental units or trailer homes.

“They may have a roof over their heads, but they are low income, or extremely poor or working poor,” he said,

and a large number of them are elderly.

A significant portion of these near North Valley residents, Whatley said, will likely become new clients at The Rock at Noon Day, which already provides services to homeless people who take refuge in the neighborhood near the railroad tracks, under bridges, in empty lots and alleyways, and at Coronado Park.

The Rock's new and larger social hall/worship area with its high-pitched ceiling can accommodate 437 people at a meal sitting, 117 more than at the old location, Whatley said. The food will be prepared in a large kitchen with state-of-the-art, all-stainless steel commercial appliances, including a walk-in cooler and a walk-in freezer.

Noon Day currently serves about 120,000 meals each year.

The building also houses separate bathrooms with showers for men and women; a laundry room with commercial-size washers and dryers; a clothing exchange room; administrative offices; two phone rooms; and several conference and meeting rooms.

The conference rooms will accommodate weekly visits from other providers of services to the poor and homeless, including Albuquerque Heading Home, Healthcare for the Homeless and agencies that donate legal services.

As funds become available, a large outdoor courtyard will be outfitted with playground equipment for use in an after-school program for kids, Whatley said.

The new building cost about \$2 million to construct, not including the cost of the large lot on which it sits, which was purchased by the Noon Day board of directors about 10 years ago.

The old Noon Day Ministries building was owned by and sits behind the First Baptist Church.

"We knew the church was eventually going to sell the property, so we anticipated for some time that this relocation was coming," Whatley said.

About six years ago, First Baptist Church vacated the building due to decreasing church attendance at that Downtown location and a desire to build a new church on the West Side.

In July, the University of New Mexico purchased the First Baptist property for \$6.65 million as part of a broad plan by UNM, the city and the business community to build a high-tech research and development zone.



Noon Day Ministries is expected to be up and running as The Rock at Noon Day in its new location starting Tuesday, Whatley said. It will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesdays through Fridays, and on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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