

To the Board of Zoning Adjustment:

I am writing to express my strong support for St. Thomas Parish' building project in advance of the Board of Zoning Adjustment meeting on December 15, 2015. I am a long-time District of Columbia resident of over 17 years and for the majority of those years, I lived within walking distance of St. Thomas' Parish in the Dupont Circle neighborhood.

St. Thomas' Parish has been part of the Dupont Circle and Washington, D.C. community for over a century - it once had the most prominent church building in D.C. It is a church of past presidents, provided shelter for those protesting war and social injustice in the 1960s and 1970s, cared for people battling AIDS in the 1980s, and has been a leading advocate of social justice, including affirmation of same-sex marriage. The original church building was unfortunately burned down by an arsonist in 1970, which leaves our growing spiritual community squished into an inadequate parish house that survived the arson.

We were blessed with a son over 3 years ago and just recently with a daughter, both of whom are part of St. Thomas' growing spiritual family. The current parish house that we worship in does not have enough space - our youngest members and their families are squished into a small corner during service. This was never designed as a permanent worship home and is no longer adequate for the church's current needs, much less for sustaining a thriving community through the next century.

St. Thomas conducted a long and detailed planning process three years ago - it is these essential needs that are driving the requested variance in percent of lot coverage. We need a new facility that supports our basic needs for engaging in our ministry and mission for the next 100 years. The percentage of lot coverage for our original building that was burned down by an arsonist in 1970 was in fact just slightly greater than the percentage we are now requesting - in reality, we are not asking for anything new by way of this variance.

We have been members of St. Thomas for several years, and are part of a thriving spiritual community. St. Thomas welcomes all, without judgment and with an open heart. I fully support St. Thomas' building project. We need a new home where the church can fully function for its members and the neighborhood. Its leaders have gone through a thoughtful process to develop a building plan that addresses both the needs of its members and its neighbors.

Thank you,

Peter Jue
DC Resident, Formerly Ward 2, now living in Ward 4