

Councilmember Jack Evans
Council of the District of Columbia

Dear Councilman Evans:

There has been an Episcopal Church on the corner of 18th St NW and Church St NW for more than 120 years. Not everyone is supportive of that continuing to be the case. St. Thomas' Parish, which I am honored as a fourth generation Washingtonian to serve as their first woman rector, has been a voice of tolerance, inclusion, and respect through thick and thin in the history of Dupont Circle. When others left the city after the riots of the 1960s, St. Thomas' Parish chose to remain despite our original structure being burned by arsonists in 1970. As the neighborhood became a center of the LGBT community in Washington, DC, we were proud to welcome all who came to our doors. Now, as young couples – straight and gay – bring their children looking for a spiritual home, we are overjoyed to have the chance to provide a place where they can learn what it's like to grow up valuing radical hospitality and courageous justice.

St. Thomas' Parish is committed to the future of Dupont Circle and the city of Washington, DC. In a time when voices of anger and divisiveness and intolerance often have come to dominate the airwaves in our nation, we have chosen a different path and a different voice. We are building a new home for a community that would nurture the dignity of every human being, that would refuse to be drawn into tactics of division, that would in fact as well as word try to love even our enemies, as Jesus taught us.

I know as a leader of an urban parish how easy it is to be swayed by the loudest and angriest voices seeking my attention. I also know that being a leader for me has meant learning how to choose what is right, not what is expedient; what is best for all, not just a few; what serves the long range goals of a community, not just the short term desires and voices of demand. As a leader of Washington, DC, with almost a quarter-century of service in public office, I know that you, too, are all too familiar with the dynamics that drive so much of our civic life. And I know you have not been, and I believe you do not seek to be, a voice of divisiveness.

And so I appeal to you and your commitment to the future of the city and the Dupont Circle neighborhood, to support this final step in the approval process of our building effort at St. Thomas' Parish, granting us a zoning variance to start the construction on a building that has been under review and discussion for more than two years. We are not making any last minute changes, some 'new' demands; we are asking for the approval process to be allowed to move forward, so that we can insure our presence in your city in the generations to come.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Nancy L. Jose, Rector
St. Thomas' Parish