1419 Crittenden Street, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20011

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
2000 NOV 17 A 9:51

November 8, 2000

Jerrily R. Kress
Director, DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, N.W., Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Director Kress:

We are writing to express our opposition to the application for a zoning variance filed by the Medhane Alem Eritrean Orthodox Church with regard to the premises at 4700 14th Street, N.W., which will be considered by the Board of Zoning Adjustment at the public hearing on November 28, 2000. Since we will be traveling abroad at that time and unable to attend the hearing, we ask that our comments be considered by the Board and made a part of the record.

The neighborhood that includes this property is a diverse and welcoming one, and we would like to have been able to support this application. But as longtime residents of the same block of Crittenden Street on which the church proposes to locate, we are very concerned that the granting of a variance will exacerbate the serious parking problems on Crittenden and neighboring streets, and will hinder the ongoing efforts of our community association to rehabilitate the business district along the 4700 block of 14th Street.

Street parking is at a premium in our neighborhood. Most residents have no off-street parking available to them, and they and their guests are dependent on the permit spaces along the street. We are sometimes forced to park a considerable distance from our home because of visitors who park—often illegally—for events taking place at the five churches that already exist within a three-block radius of the proposed site. The addition of another 120-person congregation would turn this problem into a nightmare.

The approval of this application would also seriously damage the efforts of our neighborhood association to attract small, locally-owned businesses, like the newly-opened Mocha Hut. Few businesses will be enticed by a block where patrons cannot find parking. Few will want to locate near a corner that is anchored, not by a thriving commercial enterprise, but by a church building that is vacant for much of the week, inviting the litter, loitering, and drug and alcohol abuse we are working so hard to eliminate.

BZA
Case No. 16632
Exhibit No. 26

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16632
EXHIBIT NO.26

The corner of 14th Street and Crittenden is a linchpin of the local area plan which is presently under development. What that plan envisions for this site is the kind of enterprise that would bring goods and services to the neighborhood and contribute to its economic revival.

Unfortunately, it appears that the owner of the property has little interest in being a part of that vision. He is proceeding with renovations without having obtained the proper approvals and without consulting with the community regarding his plans. Indeed, it is our understanding that he has ignored repeated invitations from the ANC and the Sixteenth Street Neighborhood Association to discuss the proposed use of the property. This certainly does not inspire confidence that he and his tenants will be good neighbors to the surrounding community.

For the foregoing reasons, we respectfully urge that the application not be approved.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Agrast

David M. Hollis

cc: Councilmember-Elect Adrian Fenty
Acting Director Milton Bailey, DHCD