

St Thomas DC (Washington)

TYPE	DIOCESE	NAME
Congregation	Washington	

TYPES OF WORK	POSITION TITLE/ROLE
Full Time	Rector/Priest-in-Charge

ROLE SUMMARY/DESCRIPTION

St. Thomas' Parish, a vibrant and welcoming church in the Dupont Circle neighborhood of Washington, DC, seeks a priest whose strengths include dynamic preaching, multicultural ministry, community outreach, and financial management.

There is a sweet, sweet spirit at St. Thomas' Parish, and resilience, community, and laughter are in our DNA. We are excited for a next clergy leader to walk with us in that spirit, toward our next incarnation of what it means to be the body of Christ in this city, at this time.

We are currently receiving names for this position until 10/06/2026.

CURRENT STATUS	RECEIVING NAMES FROM	TO
No longer receiving names	08/05/2026	10/06/2026

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Please send a cover letter, resume, one recorded sermon, Vocation Hub profile, and references to The Rev. Canon Anna Olson, aolson@edow.org

CANDIDATE NARRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

2. How are you preparing yourself for the Church of the future?, 5. What has been your experience leading change in the Church?, 7. Have you led or participated in multilingual or cross-cultural worship?, 10. What theological convictions shape your ministry?, 16. In what ways are you engaged in your wider Church or local community?

CONTACT

NAME	The Rev. Canon Anna Olson
ROLE	Canon for Faith, Leadership, and Collaboration
ORGANIZATION	Episcopal Diocese of Washington
PHONE NUMBER	(202) 537-6546
EMAIL ADDRESS	aolson@edow.org

POSITION DETAILS

ORDERS OF MINISTRY	GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION
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POSITION PROFILE

Priest

Mid-Atlantic

WORK ENVIRONMENT

MINISTRY SETTING

In Person

Urban

PAROCHIAL REPORT DATA

AVG. SUNDAY ATT.

66

ANNUAL BUDGET

740000

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW NARRATIVE

A decade ago, St. Thomas' Parish, having worshiped for years in what remained of the parish hall after a 1970 fire gutted the grand original church building, bet everything on transformation. Following much discernment and planning, the greater part of the lot owned by the church was sold to a real estate developer. The parish held forth a vision of using the proceeds to fund a modern, welcoming, inspiring building with space for tenants and event rentals. After two years of construction, worship returned to 18th & Church Streets NW for the 2019 Great Vigil of Easter.

That vision has been largely realized; in addition to our vibrant Sunday Eucharist services, hundreds of non-parishioners enter our doors each week. We have two long-term tenants: the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, which has a suite of offices and holds rehearsals in our nave and in other community spaces; and Capital Clubhouse, a weekday program for adults with mental illness, who work together and with social workers to develop life skills and workplace readiness skills. Nearly one-third of our budget is made up of income from these two tenants and other space rentals.

Even with this base of support, there is still work to be done to ensure the parish's long-term financial stability. Our stewardship program has a lot of room for growth, and we place high importance on bringing in a rector who is skilled at stewardship and fundraising. We have three investment accounts. The first is regularly tapped for operational funding at levels that are unsustainable in the long term. The second is used to provide a rector housing allowance. The third was established in 2023 to honor our Bishop-in-Residence, the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, and is earmarked for outreach work.

FINANCIAL RESOURCE TYPE None

STIPEND, HOUSING, AND BENEFITS

COMPENSATION/SALARY DETAIL

RANGE \$125,001 - \$150,000

DETAILS

This range includes cash salary and cash housing allowance. Entire compensation and benefits package will be determined with EDOW guidelines, based on years of experience and other factors.

HOUSING/RECTORY TYPE

TYPE OF HOUSING PROVIDED Cash Stipend

DETAILS

See above for cash salary plus housing allowance range

SECA REIMBURSEMENT DETAIL

REIMBURSEMENT OFFERED Full

DETAILS

7.65% of cash salary and housing

MEDICAL & PENSION BENEFITS DETAIL

PENSION PLAN

In compliance with CPF requirements

HEALTHCARE OPTIONS

Clergy +1

DETAILS

Our current health insurance coverage guideline for all full-time staff is employee +1 on the EDOW base plan, church pays 75% and insured pays 25%.

VACATION, CONTINUING EDUCATION, AND OTHER BENEFITS

VACATION & LEAVE DETAILS

In alignment with EDOW guidelines: 4 weeks (20 days) which includes 5 Sundays

CONTINUING EDUCATION DETAILS

In alignment with EDOW guidelines: 1 week (5 days) + \$1,000 per calendar year

SABBATICAL PROVISION DETAILS

In alignment with EDOW guidelines: 12 weeks of paid sabbatical time after 5 years of continuous service. Sabbatical programmatic funds must be raised from outside the congregation.

TRAVEL/AUTO ACCOUNT DETAILS

In alignment with EDOW guidelines: \$1,000 per calendar year

EQUIPMENT/PHONE DETAILS

Have not provided in the past, negotiable

OTHER BENEFITS OR COMMENTS

POSITION PROFILE

DIOCESAN COMPENSATION INFORMATION (IF APPLICABLE)

FORMAT None

MINISTRY CONTEXT AND DESIRED SKILLS

WHAT ARE YOUR COMMUNITY'S HOPES FOR THIS POSITION?

There is a sweet, sweet spirit at St. Thomas' Parish, and resilience, community, and laughter are in our DNA. We are excited for a next clergy leader to walk with us in that spirit, toward our next incarnation of what it means to be the body of Christ in this city, at this time.

We hope to welcome a pastor who enjoys recognizing, developing and drawing out parishioners' spiritual gifts; who cares about social justice and knows how it feels to engage in the holiest forms of outreach and service; who knows and loves Episcopal tradition and explains and shares that enthusiasm with others, yet also experiments with innovative and multicultural elements of worship; who is savvy enough to recognize and act on the unique challenges and opportunities of being a faith community in Washington D.C., at this specific time and place; who has the capacity to manage a complicated set of tenants and a lean budget; and who most of all loves God and embraces joy.

In return, we offer a community that always punches above its weight; that lingers over coffee hour, catching up and celebrating milestones and achievements; that takes the question "What would Jesus do?" very literally; that loves to learn and serve and eat and love.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Administration, Collaborative Leadership, Congregational Development, Fundraising and/or Capital Campaigns, Strategic Planning

MINISTRY SKILLS

Adult Formation, Asset Based Community Development, Community Building, LGBTQIA+ Ministries, Multicultural Ministry, Outreach, Pastoral Care, Preaching, Stewardship, Worship & Liturgy

LANGUAGES SPOKEN

English, Spanish

LANGUAGES WRITTEN

English, Spanish

LANGUAGES REQUIRED TO LEAD WORSHIP

English

1. What is your organization's mission and focus?

Describe your core mission and ministry priorities. What values guide your work, and what is your community or organization striving to embody in this season of ministry?

Our mission statement says: “We are followers of Jesus, striving to see Christ in each person and to be Christ in our community, our city and our world.” We live that out by offering warm and vibrant community to those who have not always experienced church as welcoming, and by looking outward. St. Thomas’ has repeatedly chosen mission over comfort, trusting that God calls us to serve the needs of our community, even when doing so requires significant risk.

A defining moment came after a 1970 fire destroyed our historic building. The congregation undertook a period of discernment that led to a renewed focus on mission. We chose to remain in Dupont Circle, reimagine the use of our property and invest in ministries that would serve a changing neighborhood. This reshaped St. Thomas’ into a parish known for responding faithfully to God’s call in the present.

That spirit also shaped our commitment to radical welcome. During the AIDS crisis, St. Thomas’ opened its doors to people rejected by families, communities, and even churches. We provided pastoral care, hosted funerals and stood alongside those affected by the epidemic. Building on that witness, the parish called the Rev. James Holmes as rector, one of the first openly gay priests in a committed relationship to lead an Episcopal parish. At a time of considerable controversy within the wider Church, St. Thomas’ chose inclusion and dignity. The result was a stronger congregation and a reputation as a place where all are welcomed and valued.

More recently, the parish embraced another significant challenge: the redevelopment of our property and construction of a new church home. This required patience, sacrifice, fundraising, and trust in a future that was not yet visible. The result is a flexible, accessible, and mission-focused building that supports worship, community partnerships, and outreach in the heart of Washington, D.C.

Today, that willingness to take risks leads us to engage with the changing realities of our city. We have welcomed migrants and asylum seekers into our community, and have leaned into existing as a bilingual congregation. These ministries have stretched us, broadened our understanding of hospitality and deepened our relationships across cultures.

The common thread throughout our history is a willingness to choose mission over preservation, inclusion over exclusion, and hope over fear. Those choices have strengthened our congregation and expanded our witness to God’s love in the world.

2. How would you describe your ministry context?

Share about the setting and community you serve. What are the unique characteristics of your context - such as urban, rural, or suburban dynamics; multi-faith or multicultural environments; community partnerships; or social and cultural factors that shape your ministry?

St. Thomas' is in the diverse Dupont Circle neighborhood, a lively urban area made up of residential buildings and commercial corridors. The neighborhood has a large and vibrant LGBTQ+ community. There are people living within our neighborhood with needs who are often ignored or hidden from view. The organizations we host: 12-step groups, a day program for people living with mental illness, a summer youth job training program, and the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington – reflect the breadth of those needs. We have also responded, through staffing and through work discussed elsewhere, to the surge of immigrants into the city and the struggles they have faced under the current Administration.

Currently about half of us identify as LGBTQ+. 20% live in the immediate area; others come from across the city and nearby suburbs. Members range from young families with children to retirees, but we have fewer children and elderly members than most other churches. Our average age is 52, but we have a strong and growing presence of young professionals. Fewer than half are cradle Episcopalians, and blended-faith families are typical. Many members are associated with the public sector, including Federal employees, contractors, activists, and NGO staffers; many also come from the helping professions. About 5% are ordained, either in the Episcopal Church or in another tradition. A multicultural group of refugees and asylum seekers, many but not all Spanish-speaking, look to us for support and community, and some have become pillars of our parish. The nature of the city means that parishioners, especially younger ones, can be quite transient as their work and personal situations shift.

We have a friendly relationship with St. Luke's, a nearby historically Black Episcopal Church, and have also engaged with St. Margaret's and St. George's, two other Episcopal churches in the central DC region. There is room for exploration about how we might cooperate more closely in the future with these or other congregations.

3. How would you describe your congregational/diocesan leadership culture?

Reflect on how your community approaches leadership - what styles and qualities you value in clergy, how leadership is shared between clergy and laity, and how you navigate change and challenges.

We prioritize a welcoming, inspiring, and inclusive leadership culture in both laity and clergy. We respond with an enthusiastic “yes” to new opportunities and engage with them authentically, with mind, heart, and drive. We address challenges collectively, mobilizing consensus and support.

The congregation appreciates robust and entrepreneurial lay leadership that happens organically. There is a desire for more central support, more supportive participation structures, more institutional knowledge management, and practices that survive human transitions. Involvement and leadership vary widely; some people feel over-asked, others want more information about how to contribute.

There is ample parishioner energy for a rector who is a strong organizer who engages, mobilizes, and empowers lay participation. We welcome leadership from clergy in liturgy, church life, and social action. We appreciate sermons based in scripture, engaging both heart and intellect, and preachers who honestly share their personal spiritual journeys.

4. How would you describe your congregational/diocesan liturgical styles and practice?

Share how worship is shaped in your community - what influences your liturgical life, how you balance tradition and innovation, and how liturgy reflects your theology and context.

Our liturgy embodies radical hospitality. We want all parts of the liturgy to reflect our progressive theology that welcomes everyone.

Progressive liturgy is part of our history. A past rector, the Rev. Henry Bruel, was a leader in efforts that led to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. The 1998 liturgy we developed for blessing same-sex unions was adopted by EDOW until the Bishop's approval of marriage equality. We recently started using the Service of Renaming for our transgender siblings.

We generally use Eucharistic prayers from the BCP, but enjoy Enriching our Worship, A New Zealand Prayer Book, and other progressive sources. We use the St. Helena Psalter and gender-inclusive or gender-neutral texts. We modify anti-Semitic texts in the lectionary and take initiative to discuss the history of texts that have been used against women, LGBTQ+ people, and Muslims and Jews.

We consider ourselves broad church, with different members of the parish preferring a little lower or higher. Currently, we offer bilingual services, with the service bulletin printed in both English and Spanish and live simultaneous translation available via headsets (when the celebrant or lector is able, prayers and readings are offered in both languages in an alternating manner).

We love joyful liturgy when appropriate. Our simple, white, light-filled nave is a perfect backdrop for more colorful expressions. We use blue during Advent to honor Mary and other great women of the Bible. We mark Gaudete Sunday and Laetare Sunday with pink in the sanctuary and a pink-themed coffee hour. We celebrate Pride with the colors of the rainbow in June. We have a colorful, floral chasuble for Rogation Sunday. Beautiful and bold flower arrangements, made by our beloved Flower Guild, are an important part of our worship. We welcome unique stagings in our worship space to mark the liturgical year.

Our parish loves music and our choir, with its college interns. We enjoy traditional Anglican choral music and desire a well-done integration of multicultural and Spanish-language music. Members want to see more use of Lift Every Voice and Sing and Wonder, Love, and Praise.

We want clean and clear liturgy with consistency, stability, and excellence. During services, we treat children as the Church, rather than just its future. We hope for sermons grounded in theology that embody social justice with a call for these times. Ultimately, we are a parish of progressive, inclusive, and well-done liturgy.

5. How does your congregation/diocese approach cultural identity and inclusion?

Reflect on how your community engages diverse cultural identities, fosters belonging, and responds to the needs of a diverse or evolving population.

St. Thomas' Parish is a place where "welcome" is not just a buzzword. We make sure everyone is seen, including at the altar. We are not shy about engaging acolytes, lectors, and others at the table who may not speak English, are queer, have transitioned, are new to the church... the list grows as we do.

In recent years, in partnership with a variety of organizations, we have supported a range of migrants, immigrants, and refugees. Some have become members of our community—holding weddings, baptizing children, worshiping regularly in the nave, bringing foods to coffee hour and traditions to holidays. We have leaned in, offering bilingual service bulletins and simultaneous sermon translations. The challenges currently facing immigrants in this country are felt very keenly and painfully throughout the parish; and, in many cases, relationships with and support for immigrant parishioners continue more on a one-on-one basis than centrally through the church.

Other longstanding outreach relationships connect our members in direct service activities with vulnerable communities and individuals. These include Christ House, a residential facility for unhoused men receiving medical treatment, where once a month, a team of parishioners prepares and serves dinner. Other parishioners have been involved with Samaritan Ministries, which works to support people reentering the workforce.

Our building, which can be confusing to visitors because, to some, it doesn't look "like a church," has become one of our most important tools for inclusion. We don't have stained glass and fixed pews in our sanctuary. Instead, clear windows offer narrow slices of the city streetscape and the natural world. Newcomers who have negative associations with traditional churches can feel right away that this place may be different -- and even parishioners who love stained glass come to cherish transparency, simplicity, and the possibilities of a blank slate.

Another way in which we model inclusion is by maintaining our livestream so that parishioners who are away, ill, or for other reasons unable to be there in person can stay connected (we have a jury-rigged WhatsApp call through which Spanish speakers can listen to the translation). We have even at times had viewers living very far away who considered us their church.

MINISTRY MEDIA AND LINKS

Website	http://stthomasdc.org/
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/StThomasDC
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/stthomasdc/
Youtube	https://www.youtube.com/StThomasEpiscopalDC

NARRATIVES

1. Describe your congregation's/diocese's theology or spiritual identity.

Reflect on key moments or experiences that have shaped or challenged your congregation's theological understanding or self-identity.

St. Thomas' members come to us for progressive and inclusive theology in action, but tend to yearn for something more – even as they struggle to fit more contemplative spirituality into busy lives. We offer many opportunities for "involvement," but involvement is not always the same thing as discipleship or community. People are often quickly encouraged into volunteer roles, but less attention has been paid to relationship-building, pastoral connection, or ongoing spiritual formation once they are serving. We are eager for our next chapter to strengthen a culture of listening, accompaniment, and intentional care to help members feel valued not simply for what they do, but for who they are.

We had two very successful rounds of the Episcopal Church's Sacred Ground anti-racism series several years ago. We have had wonderful study groups with nearby St. Luke's and St. Margaret's. In the past, we have had a successful Small Group ministry focused on topics such as "What's Up with Paul?" Currently, we organize book-based study groups during Lent and Advent. We usually have an Advent quiet day and a Saturday Lenten retreat. For years now, we have held annual Foyer Dinner groups that help members get to know each other better on a social level. The Foyer Dinner groups are one of the parish's most successful offerings.

Members also want a clearer path of discipleship that leads to confirmation or reception into the Episcopal Church. With members coming to us from diverse religious backgrounds – or none at all – this path is not clear to all, and we look to a new priest to lead us in building it. Several young people have said, "I'm not the type of person to meet in the priest's office or go with them to coffee."

Members want to counter these chaotic times with spiritual tools and growth. We are in the early stages of discerning exactly what that spiritual help looks like – and how to help people with crowded schedules and high-stress lives make time to engage. Members in their 20s report a desire for more Bible study, including on creation care. They also desire preaching that includes historical, cultural, and linguistic analysis.

3. What is a ministry risk your congregation/diocese has taken, and what came of it?

Reflect on a time your community stepped out of its comfort zone to meet a new need or respond creatively to a challenge.

In spring 2022, the governor of Texas, angry about immigration at the Southern border, began busing migrants to D.C. A mutual aid group approached us about providing space for one busload of people to get something to eat and figure out their next steps. We said yes -- and for nearly a year after that, we opened our community room almost every Saturday morning, cooked a hot breakfast, made stacks of sandwiches, and literally welcomed the stranger.

That same year, we had helped receive two young refugee women from Afghanistan, and opened our then-vacant 3rd floor to receive used clothing from dozens of D.C. faith communities wanting to help the arriving Afghans. The clothing area became a "free store" where the bused migrants could find something clean to wear after their long journey.

There was no manual for those Saturday mornings. In many ways, it was joyful chaos. In others, it was appalling and heartbreaking. We were able to see these newcomers not as news headlines or political talking points, but as fearful and hopeful humans.

Some of the migrants stayed in the D.C. area. Some became parishioners. We started providing bilingual service bulletins and simultaneous translation on Sunday mornings. We organized various projects for Latino migrants and asylum seekers: a children's summer day camp, a team of women advising expectant mothers, a social gathering for LGBTQ+ migrants, a Christmas party with Venezuelan food and piles of donated toys. Parishioners helped with benefit and school applications, drove people to medical appointments, and more. In late 2023, we formally partnered with Rainbow Railroad, an NGO supporting LGBTQ+ refugees. Groups based at St. Thomas' welcomed 7 refugees, and we helped advise welcome teams elsewhere.

Since the change in administrations, the flow of refugees has stopped, ending our Rainbow Railroad partnership, and many of the migrants and asylum seekers we know and love are wary of coming to church. We are upset and unsure. St. Thomas' is at another pivot point, discerning the next steps in our ongoing work for and relationships with immigrants, and how we may best connect with and serve our Spanish-speaking community. Many in the congregation, especially our younger members, are pushing to discern other initiatives that might engage our community in the direct, relational work that so many of us found inspiring and deeply spiritual. These are live issues our next rector will discern with us.

4. How does your congregation/diocese discern and adapt to the changing needs of your community?

Share an example of how your congregation listened, responded, and experimented faithfully in your context.

St Thomas has a 60-year history of lay and ordained leaders working together to engage and respond to community needs. Our past includes clergy and lay leadership in responding to the civil rights movement, the AIDS epidemic, the debate over marriage equality, trans rights, and the recent refugee crisis—sometimes with the diocese, sometimes ahead of it. We attract both members who in their day jobs are community leaders *and* members who look to the congregation as the place for a faithful response to what they see in the news and experience in their own lives.

Right now, this looks like a congregation and a neighborhood where people have suffered significant job loss and economic hardship from the policies of the current Administration; who fear for their ability to stay in the country as immigrants; and who fear for their equal rights and dignity as LGBTQ+ persons, people of color, and women.

Over the last 12 months, parish members have created a support group for the newly unemployed; sustained our support for migrants and refugees as best we could without either a Spanish-fluent rector or the funding that previously supported that mission; and responded to the needs of our tenants and partner organizations as they lost funding or major relationships because they were LGBTQ+ or disability-focused. We have seen an influx of new and younger worshipers who tell us that they are drawn to a denomination and a parish where we talk about what is happening to our city, country, and planet—and act on it.

We seek a rector who hears and supports initiatives emerging from the congregation as well as from our neighbors in Dupont Circle and beyond; who brings initiatives back to the parish; and who connects with, and sometimes pushes, the diocese to engage more with the needs we are hearing. For example, it is clear from the newcomers that the wider community is hungry for both active and spiritual responses to what is going on around us. We have tried some small experiments like hosting a sound bath at the end of Pride Weekend, but there is a much larger call here.

6. In what ways is your congregation/diocese engaged in the wider Church or local community?

Whether through diocesan leadership, ecumenical partnerships, civic involvement, or community organizing, describe how your congregation serves beyond its own walls.

In our diocese's framework for assessing parish vitality, the concept of "Blessing our Community" resonated deeply with us. We have found that we can expand our reach and enhance our lives through wholehearted relationships and partnerships.

We have a strong history of members discerning calls to the priesthood and diaconate, and of fostering ministry development in the wider church with postulants and an annual placement of a seminarian from Virginia Theological Seminary. We are committed to worship, formation, outreach, and social collaborations with nearby Episcopal and non-Episcopal faith communities.

Our "meet the moment" spirit, our Metro-friendly location, and our fully accessible building have led to leadership opportunities in the diocese. We hosted Presiding Bishop Curry at a 2020 youth outreach event, and regularly offer space for other EDOW meetings and events. Our clergy have taken leadership roles in our local deanery and the diocese, and our rector and parishioners have served EDOW in such ways as serving on standing committees and coaching parishes in the Tending Our Soil program for congregational revitalization.

We also host nonreligious neighborhood and city initiatives, such as a mutual aid-run food distribution that works out of our front garden area on Saturdays, a D.C. Government-funded summer youth employment training program, a weekday program for adults with mental illness, and 12-step groups. We provide the headquarters and rehearsal space for the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington. Nearby condo boards and other small groups rent out our conference rooms from time to time for meetings. Each June we hold a Capital Pride open house where people on their way to and from the downtown parade and other activities find restrooms, water, air conditioning, and phone charging. Drawing on staff and members, our thriving music program has hosted concerts and sidewalk performances of jazz, bluegrass, and other genres.

16. In what ways has your congregation/diocese grown in cultural competency?

Share how your community navigates cultural differences, listens to diverse voices, and leads with humility and awareness.

The work to grow in cultural competency has been a priority in at least the last few years, and the effort and intention are noticeable. We care very much about cultural competency as part of our commitment to follow Christ in radical welcome.

We are intentional about worship that widely welcomes. We have new name ceremonies, weddings, and baptisms with people of all races, genders, and first languages serving behind the altar, preaching and teaching. We extend an invitation to Holy Communion that strips away traditional limitations and welcomes all. We have a culture in liturgy and preaching to be transparent and unflinching about places where tradition has been less radically welcoming than Christ calls us to be. Plenty of our parishioners and neighbors have church trauma in their backgrounds, and we understand radical welcome across all human differences to be one of the core purposes of our congregation and our building.

Further back in our history we were a white D.C. society church. We have engaged with this part of our history through a well-attended Sacred Ground program, through parishioners' involvement in the diocesan reparations process, and through episodic engagement with neighboring historically Black churches; how we want to move forward with this part of our identity is not yet resolved.

Our work with refugees and migrants engaged and energized much of the parish, and many people built real relationships with refugees and migrants - friendships that persist outside of church. Inside the church, parishioners brushed up on their language skills as Spanish became one of the languages of our parish. The next stage of this cultural work for us is engaging with what it means to be fully in community, rather than parallel congregations separated by language.

Cultural competency is work we care a lot about, and we want to continue to grow here. A recent anecdote about the way it feels to worship with us: a couple visited some years ago when looking for a new church home, and felt that St. Thomas' was too formal for them. But on a more recent visit, they saw people casually dressed, kids being kids, and people feeling comfortable coming in late, and decided St. Thomas' could be their new church home.