

Court denies DC's request to dismiss Church's lawsuit to raze Brutalist building

Washington, D.C. Apr 07, 2009 At a hearing held today (April 7) in D.C. federal district court, Judge James Robertson denied District of Columbia Attorney General Peter Nickles' motion to dismiss the Third Church of Christ Scientist's lawsuit against the District. The church is seeking to tear down its building in downtown DC because the building is falling apart and the building's walls of forbidding concrete spurn others instead of welcoming them. After the church applied to demolish the building last year, the District's Historic Preservation Review Board landmarked the building, claiming that it is a prime exemplar of "low bar Brutalism." Brutalism is a mid- 20th Century school of architecture that normally involves large expanses of windowless concrete.

Judge Robertson rejected the District's arguments from the bench and allowed the lawsuit to proceed. The judge also noted that the Church had been forced to lay off its organist due to the ongoing costs of maintaining the Brutalist building.

"This is an important step in getting the Church out of the concrete straitjacket that is slowly strangling it," said Eric Rassbach, national litigation director at The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a civil rights law firm that represents the church. "Architecture conveys meaning, and this building says 'Go away' when Third Church wants to say 'Come on in!'" "One would think that historic preservationists, of all people, would understand that buildings are form of communication."

The Becket Fund is jointly representing the church with Roman Storzer of Storzer & Greene and George Keys of Jordan Keys.

www.becketfund.org

About The Becket Fund

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty is a nonpartisan, interfaith, public-interest law firm dedicated to protecting the free expression of all religious traditions.

Website: <http://www.becketfund.org>

Kristina Arriaga
The Becket Fund
Communications Director
email: karriaga@becketfund.org
cell: 703-582-8962

Eric Rassbach
The Becket Fund
National Litigation Director
email: erassbach@becketfund.org
phone: 202-349-7214