

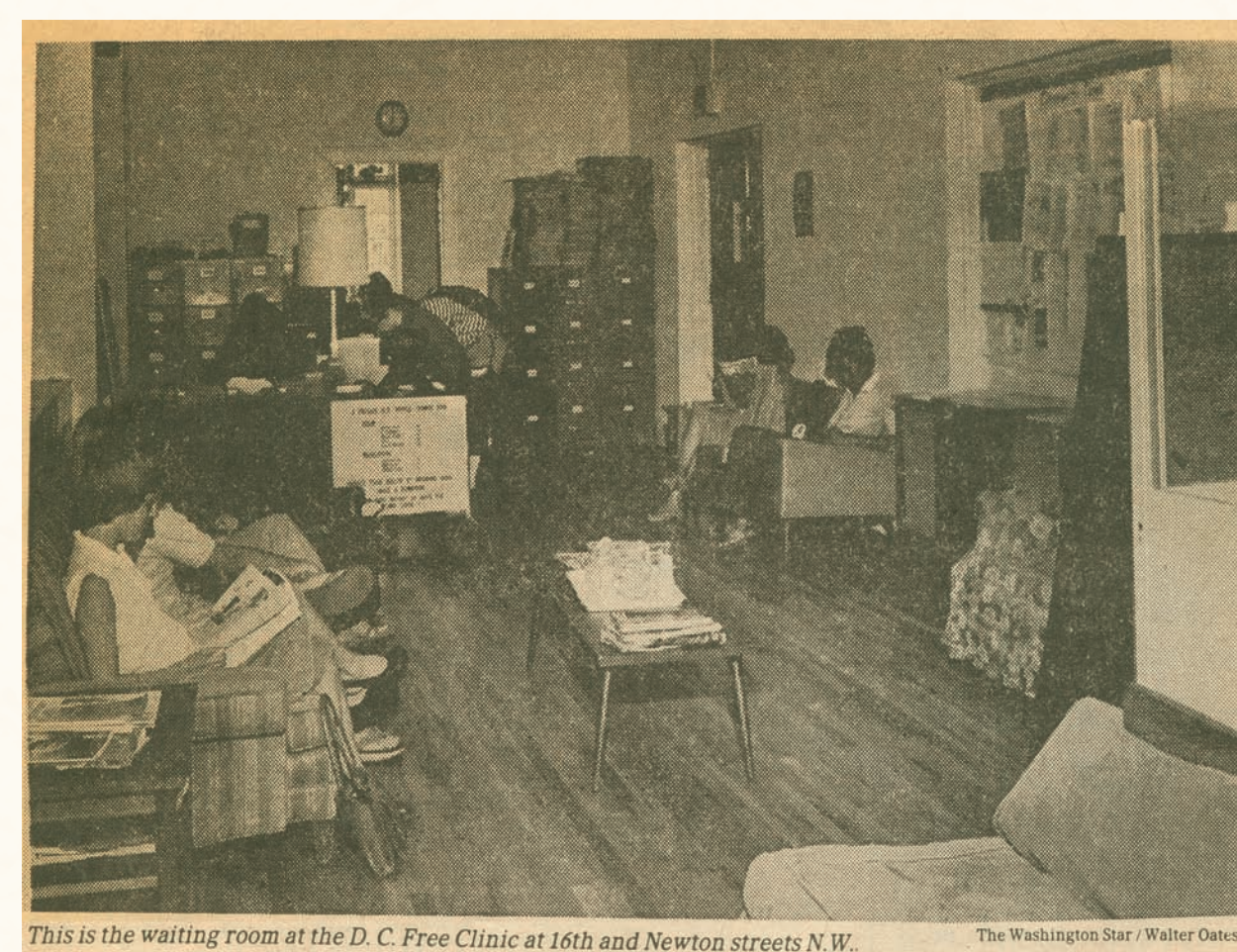
A PAGE FROM THE LONG AND AMAZING HISTORY OF ST. STEPHEN AND THE INCARNATION EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Washington Free Clinic



In 1968, the Washington Free Clinic opened in a church in Georgetown, serving primarily the many runaways and at-risk gay and straight youth who populated Georgetown in the 1960s.

In 1980 it moved to St. Stephen's Church when its host church reclaimed its space.

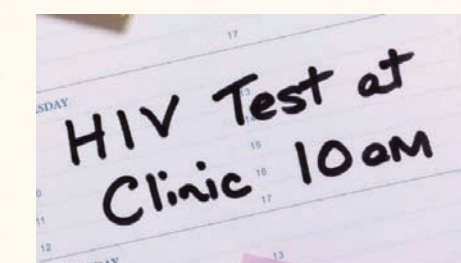


For 27 years, **the Clinic operated from the third floor of St. Stephen's.** It closed in 2007, merging with the Whitman-Walker Clinic—which had its roots in the Washington Free Clinic. The Washington Free Clinic was the oldest free clinic on the East coast and the third oldest in the country.

The Clinic had profound effects on the lives of many people, both patients and staff. One such was parishioner Elizabeth Finley, who was the Clinic's program director when it moved to St. Stephen's. "I remember vividly sitting in my Clinic office in 1981 reading about the first cases of Pneumocystis Pneumonia and Kaposi's Sarcoma in gay men in San Francisco and wondering if there was any connection to the many gay men we were seeing with unexplained weight loss and swollen lymph nodes—the **first signs of the looming HIV/AIDS crisis.** I left the Free Clinic a year later and began working on HIV/AIDS."



Couples in jeans and sneakers sat next to young mothers who tried to calm impatient children. Others, dressed for the office, apparently had come to the clinic straight from work and dozed off on worn sofas. All were waiting to see staff members of the Washington Free Clinic at its new quarters in the Church of St. Stephen and the Incarnation, at 16th and Newton streets NW. The clinic reopened in the Columbia Heights section of town in mid-March after it couldn't meet a new demand for rent payment at its original location in the Georgetown Lutheran Church. The health facility, which has been providing free family planning assistance and medical treatment since 1968, is now in a community sorely in need of its unique health services, said Betsy Finley, a nurse practitioner.



The Clinic provided pre-natal care, HIV testing and counseling, and basic medical care **to tens of thousands of patients.**



Fire fighters carried patients sick enough to need immediate hospitalization down our stairs and into waiting ambulances. **Babies were born in the clinic.**

For its first 20 some years at St. Stephen's, the Clinic had only a few air-conditioned rooms. **The Clinic would close** when the temperature in their waiting room—then an open area above the auditorium—rose to over 90 degrees. In 2002, thanks to a half-dozen DC foundations, we were able to raise sufficient funds to cool the entire building with central AC.



Dozens of other organizations have had offices at St. Stephen's over the past decades. Some are no longer in existence. Some—such as Neighbors Consejo, the Children's Studio School, and the Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School—outgrew their space here and continue to thrive. None stayed with us as long as the Washington Free Clinic, nor touched as many lives.



WIDENING THE CIRCLE THE CAMPAIGN FOR ST. STEPHEN'S