



# MADISON AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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March 12, 1999

Ms. Elizabeth Combier  
315 East 65th Street # 4-C  
New York City, NY 10021

Dear Betsy,

It has been good to see you in worship these last two Sundays and in active conversations with people at the coffee hour. It was good to be able to have a very brief conversation with you and Richard Shoup together a week ago. I had hoped to clarify what you had said the week before, but was a bit confused at your response then as well as this last Sunday, until I received Ms. Lamar's letter of March 3rd, which gives me some new insights into your response.

Betsy, I would encourage you to rethink Ms. Lamar's counsel, and join with me in meeting with Dr. Shoup. I make this recommendation for several pastoral reasons. First, this is an agreement that you made with the Commission at our meeting in February when we were all attempting to find a "good faith" solution to our differences. Your unwillingness to meet with Richard Shoup and me does not seem to me to be a "good faith" response to our agreements of that evening. Second, there have been a number of misunderstandings between us which it is important that we clear up if you are to return to active membership. Finally, I hope you do understand a very important point our Counsel, Sharon Davison, has made with Ms. Lamar: your complaint with the Presbytery of New York City's Permanent Judicial Commission has yet to go to trial. Until such time as they do go to trial, there is no appropriate role for Ms. Lamar as regards the Commission and you. You are, of course, free to seek counsel wherever you wish, whenever you wish. However, the presence of counsel in the current discussions between you and the Session Commission are not only highly inappropriate but also extremely unfortunate, and an obstacle to what the PJC was asking us to attempt to accomplish in our conversations together. I believe this is what the members of the PJC were attempting to tell you when, in response to your question on the subject, they highly discouraged you from bringing an attorney with you to the commission meeting.

As regards that meeting on February 4, the Commission met with you at the request of the PJC, as an attempt to see if we might not resolve this without going to trial. The Session granted the Commission permission to meet with you, in good faith, in order to pursue such conversations to that end. That is why we did not have counsel with us at that meeting with you on February 4. When we met that evening, we recognized that you might want to bring someone with you for personal support, thinking it might be one of the people who has come with you in the past, such as John Cole. Little did we think you would bring an attorney, especially in light of the advice you had been given by the PJC concerning the question. However, when you appeared with Ms. Lamar, we decided there was no harm in allowing her to sit in on the meeting. We had already agreed that you might need someone as support.

The Rev. Charles A. Amstein, *Associate Pastor*  
Dr. John Weaver, *Music Director / Organist*  
Patricia S. Pell, *Day School Director*

The Rev. Dr. Fred R. Anderson, *Pastor*  
The Rev. Dr. David H.C. Read, *Pastor Emeritus*

J. Richard Fry, *Business Manager*  
Fred W. Linstedt, *Building Services Director*  
J. Michael Bart, *Communications / Systems*



Fred R. Anderson  
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However, we had decided they would be allowed only as observers and not be permitted to engage in the conversations. It was clear that Ms. Lamar did not understand either her role or the status of the discussions between us that evening. At first we thought her simply attempting to be a helpful third party, though clearly an advocate for you. That is, in part, why we even agreed to communicate with you through her, believing that this might be helpful to you. However, shortly thereafter it became clear that Ms. Lamar is attempting to operate as formal counsel for you and is active in seeking litigation of the dispute between us. That has made the discussions litigious, and in my view, most unhelpful.

By several of Ms. Lamar's recent communications, it is clear that she either does not yet fully understand the status of your complaint and the process we are currently pursuing, or, has far outreached her authority. If she does understand the status of your complaint, I find her counsel to you, as reflected in her letter of March 3, to be an egregious encroachment on the relationships between a Session and one of its members and a Pastor and a church member of any status. The presence of legal counsel in these discussions is preventing open pastoral conversation and care which is essential if you are to be placed on the active church roll. Further, it is conversation that even she agreed should take place. Her advice is having a detrimental impact on the process designed to determine whether or not to return you to the active roll.

If you insisted on not meeting with Dr. Shoup and me, and are not happy with the outcome of the meeting with the Commission and want to press your complaint to trial, you may do that simply by being in contact with Mr. Henderson, Chair of the Commission. If, on the other hand, you have had second thoughts about the agreements made at our last meeting or want to revisit some of the conversation, please let me know, and I will convene the Commission to meet with you once again. However, please know that Ms. Lamar will not be allowed to represent you in any further meetings with the Session Commission.

Again, I would urge you to meet with Dr. Shoup and me, or ask for another meeting with the Session Commission to help clarify some of these issues.

Please let me know what you wish to do in this matter.

Sincerely,  
  
Fred R. Anderson  
Pastor.