Regarding use of First Christian’s musical facilities by Musicians –

From my late middle school days I have been the beneficiary of The Church affording me a place to practice both piano and organ and to participate in service. Growing up I had access to the Episcopal Church in Tazewell, Tazewell Main Street Methodist Church, as well as Tazewell Presbyterian Church. Especially for developing church organists this is a necessity.Since those early days, I have been welcomed by churches in many lands – most recently at Santo Spirito in Acqui Terme. Italy where the nuns took me under wing. Once in Sicily I practiced at a convent and before my time to play in the competition I had entered the nuns told me they had held a special time of prayer to lift me up to God.

The church has traditionally provided an umbrella under which many musicians have grown and developed. A case in point is our Jordan Carinelli who in the last seven years we have seen develop into a really wonderful musician. In these days, in which so many negative things call to our young people for involvement – to be able sustain the very long term commitment that is required to become a competent musician is at best extremely difficult.

I realize that there are practical considerations as to access and security and that as a Congregation we must make responsible, practical decisions. It has become clear that communication at a broad level regarding any activity is essential. Of course as to schedule there is no question that any practice or teaching must never impinge upon any church function. Regarding access there is essentially only the difficulty that our church office is not open during the afternoon.

The two musicians who have most recently been involved in teaching and practice at our church have both been involved in our music ministry. Kevin Matheson was approved by the board to teach violin at a meeting which if memory serves, was during the last year. He played at our 125th anniversary concert last Sept and has participated with his students in our Music at First Christian Youth Concerts. He is recently married and is assisted at the lessons by his young bride.

Connor Mautner has been my student since he was in early middle school. He is now 24 and has just finished his Master’s degree in piano performance at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. He is tofor lessons with me to prepare upcoming doctoral auditions. Life has not always been kind to Connor and he is here as much for a time of gaining spiritual strength as for preparing for future studies and piano competitions. He has found family with John and Betsy Feuchtenberger and has attended First Presbyterian Church with them. He has played and sung several times in our Music at First Christian Concerts – most recently in our Celebrate America Concert in July.

To have the opportunity to make an offering of music for our Savior is a the highest privilege - I believe in a ministry of music grounded in our Savior’s Blessed Birth, heard within the Shadow of the Cross, and proclaiming His Triumphant Resurrection. Johann Sebastian Bach’s belief that all our life and work is sacred and is an offering to our Father has long been a guiding light to me.