

## **Proud to be a Tennessee native**

Born and raised in a northeast Tennessee small town,



I have never lived anywhere other than in our great state. I grew up in a musical family anchored by parents who knew the values of hard work, faith, and stability. We sang and played at our home church (attendance and participation in its activities were not optional nor did they occur only when 'convenient') and many others in East Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, and Western North Carolina. These experiences formed my initial love of music and helped develop my ear for harmonies, which I value above the bulk of the formal training I would receive over the years.

### **Musical Education & Experience**

Piano lessons began when I entered first grade and continued under a variety of teachers through elementary and middle school. These wonderful ladies were all church musicians, thus hymns were always part of the curriculum. When people ask how I know so many hymns by heart, I usually reply, "Well, I've been playing them all my life", and that's true to a great extent. My last teacher at home, however, was a Julliard-trained instructor, and study centered around the greats - Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, Schubert, Debussy - which launched a new chapter in my playing that would take me on to college.

After graduating from Volunteer Comprehensive High School in 1985, I subsequently made my way to Austin Peay State University with a music performance scholarship, but as a vocalist (bit of a detour after a summer program at the conservatory of University of Cincinnati). I changed majors after the first year, returning to the piano and studying under Dr. Jeff Wood, my favorite teacher among those with whom I studied. After three years at APSU, I transferred to Belmont University, continuing to study music but with a concentration in church music. I began working at a small church in Nashville while still attending Belmont, and continued there as music and youth director after leaving Belmont. I have had near continuous church employee status ever since.

### **Personal**

My wife, Karen, and I moved back to Springfield (Karen's hometown) from Nashville in 1993 when we were given the opportunity to purchase what is known as the Joseph Carter Stark house on Walnut St. Owning and maintaining what is reputedly the oldest house in Springfield means that we usually have some type of project underway (Karen refers to it as the "50 year plan"). We will celebrate our 26th wedding anniversary this year, and we have two lovely daughters. Christian faith provides the bedrock for our family, and we currently serve and attend Springfield First United Methodist Church where I am the Director of Contemporary Music and staff pianist.