

I write in enthusiastic support and endorsement of Ed Schneider.

For the past ten years, Ed and I have worked together at First Presbyterian Church, Marietta, Georgia, in my capacity as Organist. My career has been primarily as the College Organist at Agnes Scott College, and as professor of music, teaching courses in sacred music as well as organ and other classroom topics. On the side, I have served as an interim and substitute organist in metro Atlanta, and have had the opportunity to observe many choral directors and choirs in large and small churches, with primarily amateur singers and with professionally trained singers, and everything in between. After serving two six-month interim periods at First Presbyterian, working with Ed, I applied for the position as Organist because it was such a good working relationship. I had spent 25 years in Atlanta preferring temporary positions due to my full-time job at the church, but this situation was uncommonly good and we work very well together.

Let me assure you that Ed is one of the finest choral directors I have ever worked with and observed, particularly in a church setting with mostly amateur volunteers from the church. First of all, he is an excellent musician himself with superb conducting skills with both choirs and instrumentalists. Ed has a very good manner with musicians, while striving for the best and highest standards. At the same time, he is realistic in his expectations. I have known choral directors who were unbelievably demanding and impatient, and those who were too complacent. Ed is neither, striking the right balance in encouraging the best from those who work with him. Similarly, he is excellent with instrumentalists hired for special occasions for major choral/orchestral works, providing clear conducting beats and gestures, with a minimum of necessary oral explanation.

In a church, a music director works with many constituencies. From my experience, I am aware that Ed works well with the clergy in planning worship—individual services as well as long-range planning. He always without fail conveys the relevant information to the other musicians on staff so that we can select appropriate repertoire and be prepared in a timely fashion. Ed gathers the music staff monthly to plan and to discuss or resolve potential problems. He holds us accountable for our preparation and working well together. He also meets regularly with the musicians in a praise band that provides music for the contemporary service. He contracts professional instrumentalists for special occasions well in advance (typically six months or more) in order to secure the best ones. I have heard only the highest praise from these members of the Atlanta Symphony, Atlanta Opera, and Atlanta Ballet orchestras for his professionalism and musicianship. Believe me, they gripe freely to me about many other church musicians at important churches around town who are inconsiderate of them and their time, but they have the opposite comments about Ed. He is a wonderful musical colleague.

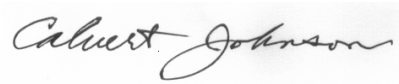
First Presbyterian Church, Marietta, has undergone some turbulent turnover among the clergy in the past five years. This has resulted in the departure of some choir members for other churches. This has nothing to do with Ed, who has continued to recruit new members from within the congregation and in the community.

As for repertoire, Ed has high standards in the selection of music for worship from diverse genres and styles. The choirs perform the best from all periods: Renaissance, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, Contemporary, Spirituals, and occasionally non-Western hymns. There is no compromise in quality, but rather an openness to diversity. He isn't stuck in a narrow range of styles. This is also evidence of his pastoral nature, because congregations are made up of very diverse people who like different kinds of music, including strictly classical, nineteenth-century gospel hymns, and contemporary praise music.

In summary, I give my highest recommendations to Ed's application. He will be sorely missed here, and I will miss him as a colleague and professional friend.

Please feel free to call, email, or write if you have any further questions.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Calvert Johnson". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Calvert Johnson  
Charles A. Dana Professor Emeritus  
Agnes Scott College

Organist  
First Presbyterian Church  
Marietta GA 30060