To get to the Independent Presbyterian Church in Memphis, I took hwy 7 north to Holly Springs, got on hwy 78 towards Memphis. I exited 78 onto 240, and took the Perkins exit. I took Perkins to Walnut Grove. The church consists of several large, red-brick buildings connected by a series of entrances and hallways.

There was a large parking lot surrounded by large, live oaks. I parked and walked up to the main, side entrance, adjacent to the sanctuary. I was in a large reception area with huge, golden chandelier hanging in the middle of the room. The receptionist called James Brown, but could not reach him. She instructed me to wait in a seating area to my right.

I sat on a maroon couch. To my left sat two flower-print chairs with a mahogany table in-between. A substantial, wooden bookcase stood to my right. An antique tapestry, picturing an ancient, pastoral scene hung on the wall by the elevator. A large staircase rose above the receptionist’s desk. I was a bit early, but only waited ten minutes before James Brown came down and welcomed me. We rode the elevator up one floor and exited to our left. We walked down a long hallway, past a few offices, until we arrived at his office, which was on our left. Inside his office there was a reception area with two desks, and we passed those two desks and walked into his office.

His office was a small room with a desk and a chair, and two chairs seated in front of the desk. James Brown sat behind the desk and I sat in one of the chairs. I placed the recorder on the desk between us. I had to adjust the input volume because there was a slight distance between us. When I checked the sound it was a tiny bit noisy, but not enough to be intrusive. Behind Dr. Brown was a bookshelf full of books and family photos.

The interview went smoothly. We discussed his upbringing and early musical training. His parents were amateur musicians, and he grew up surrounded by music. He dedicated his life to musical service in high school, and attended Sanford College for undergraduate, where he majored in music education, and then went on to Georgia for his PhD. We talked about the difficulties in managing and training an amateur choir in complicated, classical works. Dr. Brown makes use of the Memphis Symphony, and he discussed the challenges that arise in trying to balance the symphony and the choir.

James Brown’s interview was enlightening in regards to the struggles of a Music Director of a large Protestant church, and the amount of work and dedication that it required for the job. From creating special programs to the weekly Sunday services, an
enormous amount of work is required for the job. Dr. Brown did an excellent job in clearly laying out what’s involved.

The interview was interesting and free of any problems. It lasted about 56 minutes. After the interview was over Dr. Brown walked me to the hall where we shook hands and said goodbye.