

Chapter History of Milwaukee Threshold Choir

2025

Our choir was born when Rita Bertrand and Marjorie Moon, unknown to each other in September, 2022, both reached out to TCI within 12 hours. Marjorie had learned about Threshold Choir from her sister in Boston, and, immediately connecting with the idea, she contacted TCI to find a Milwaukee-based chapter. There wasn't one at the time, and their suggestion was to start one. Rita, after hearing about Threshold from her musical director at church, reached out to TCI with the same question and was urged to join forces with Marjorie.

The organization provided a coach, Linda Jones, who helped Rita and Marjorie launch their new chapter in January, 2023. Eleven people attended our inaugural meeting on April 4th, 2023, including Jenni Wolfe, leader of the Madison Threshold Singers who came to help us navigate this first rehearsal.

It took twice-monthly meetings from April, 2023 to February, 2024 to become bedside singing qualified. Since then, our members have been singing in teams of 2-4 singers most weeks at Zilber Family Hospice in Wauwatosa. We have also sung at memorial services and grief events at Zilber.

Our group has continued to grow slowly but steadily since that time. Interested singers have come to us largely through word of mouth and we welcome anyone who wishes to bring comfort through song. The only critical requirement is that each voice in the group must blend well. As we grow we have found new places to sing. In October, 2025 we began singing at a local hospital ICU, while continuing to sing at Zilber and in home hospice settings as invited.

Rehearsals are held for the whole group on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month, with a third rehearsal for newer members on the 4th Tuesday. We are a leaderful choir; we all have a say and a part to play.

The Milwaukee Threshold Choir has become a close circle of like-minded singers who work together to bring comfort and peace to people at the thresholds of life. In the words of one of our much loved Threshold songs:

*Oh, may we have a servant heart,
When loving songs we sing.
And be a blessing in the lives,
Of those for whom we sing.*

Chapter Founding

The Milwaukee Threshold Choir began in the autumn of 2022 when two strangers, Rita Bertrand and Marjorie Moon, independently reached out to Threshold Choir International within twelve hours of each other. Each had heard of Threshold through a different channel—Marjorie from her sister in Boston and Rita from her church musical director—and both were directed to the same conclusion: Milwaukee needed a chapter. TCI connected the two women and encouraged them to join forces to start a new chapter.

Chapter Launch

With coaching support from Linda Jones, Rita and Marjorie developed the new chapter through late 2022 and into January 2023. Their efforts culminated in an inaugural rehearsal on April 4, 2023, attended by eleven people, including Jenni Wolfe, leader of the Madison Threshold Singers, who offered mentorship for that first meeting. That day set the tone for a grassroots ensemble built on collaboration, listening, and shared leadership.

Training and Bedside Singing

The choir committed to structured learning and practice, meeting twice monthly from April 2023 through February 2024 to complete the bedside-singing training required by Threshold. Over those months the group built the musical skills, repertoire, and caregiver awareness needed to sing compassionately at the bedside, graduating to regular visits once members were qualified.

Places of Service

After members were ready, the choir began singing most weeks at Zilber Family Hospice in Wauwatosa in teams of two to four singers. The chapter expanded beyond hospice bedside visits to include memorial services and grief events hosted at Zilber. In October 2025 the group extended its outreach to a local hospital ICU while continuing home hospice and Zilber engagements as invited.

Growth and Membership

Membership has grown slowly and steadily, primarily through word of mouth. The choir welcomes any singer motivated to bring comfort through song, with one essential requirement: individual voices must blend well with the group. This emphasis on blend and listening preserves the choir's gentle, supportive sound and ensures that every visit is anchored in presence rather than performance.

Rehearsal Rhythm and Leadership

Rehearsals are scheduled to support both the full membership and newer singers: the whole group meets on the first and third Tuesdays of each month, while a fourth-Tuesday session focuses on newer members. The choir functions as a leaderful organization; decision-making and musical stewardship are shared, and every member is invited to contribute to repertoire, care practices, and outreach.

Culture and Impact

Over a few short years the Milwaukee Threshold Choir has become a close circle of like-minded singers who intentionally create comfort and peace for people at life's thresholds. The chapter's

work is defined by attentive listening, careful vocal blending, and a humble willingness to serve—qualities that have made them a trusted presence in hospice, hospital, and memorial settings.

In the words of one of our much-loved Threshold songs:

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When loving songs we sing.

And be a blessing in the lives,

Of those for whom we sing.