

## Chapter History for Bakersfield Threshold Singers

By Anna Murillo

### 2025

In January 2013, a friend shared the song *My Grateful Heart* by Laura Fannon with me. She was a member of Threshold Choir in Ashland and was active in end-of-life ministry. After contacting Threshold Choir through the website, I learned that there was a gathering in Santa Barbara in a few weeks and thought it would be a good opportunity to find out more about it. Four of us decided to go and see if Threshold Choir was something we wanted to bring to Bakersfield. It was at that gathering that we met Kate Munger, the founder, for the first time and experienced being sung to in the chair. We were warmly welcomed into this community as the Bakersfield Threshold Singers. We left the weekend empowered to form a chapter in our area.

Early in our formation, Kate Munger came to Bakersfield and led us in a wonderful evening of song to promote our choir. The greater Threshold Choir community supported us in our early days by inviting us to participate in a number of regional gatherings in California and our leadership team attended several All-Choir Gatherings over the past 12 years. In 2019, we hosted a southern and central California gathering in Bakersfield.

Bakersfield Threshold Singers currently has 21 singers, with 16 singing at the bedside on a regular basis. Two of the original founders are still a part of the group and one founder is helping start a new choir in Newton, Kansas. Six of our members have been with us from the beginning and many more have been with the choir for over 10 years. Two of our members have written original songs and have added new words to old songs to fit bedside sings.

Covid was a challenging time. We worked hard to stay connected with each other and our mission. We continued to have practices on Zoom at our regular times. To provide additional support during this difficult time, two of our leaders took turns sending a song a day to our members for over two years until we were able to meet in person again.

Currently we sing weekly at a local hospice house and monthly at two local hospitals. We also sing to people in the community when we are asked. Each month our choir offers two all-choir practices and two smaller practices for new members or for people wanting to learn parts other than melody. We have provided song baths to the community for many years.

Our chapter gains members through word-of-mouth, through the Threshold website, and a calendar of events through our Art for Healing program. Two of our members are sisters. We are proud to be a collaborative, "leaderful" choir and we encourage members to take a variety of roles. We have a leadership team of four who share tasks that support the strengths of each person. We welcome new members throughout the year as they find and contact us, and have a special honoring of new members once a year. We welcome new members with open arms and open hearts.

Edited LK 8/3/25

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