

## **CHAPTER HISTORY OF THE MODESTO THRESHOLD SINGERS CHAPTER**

### **Chapter Beginnings**

The Modesto Threshold Singers Chapter emerged in 2017, born from a weekend of deep musical and spiritual connection. On November 4th and 5th, Kate Munger led a transformative workshop at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stanislaus County in Modesto, California. Her presence and guidance ignited a spark among local singers, and by the end of the weekend, the Modesto chapter had officially taken shape.

The founding energy was carried by three women—Bernadette Burns, Sharon Arpoika, and Ruby Tenbrink—whose shared vision and enthusiasm laid the foundation for the chapter's future. Bernadette, who first learned about Threshold Choir at the Unitarian Universalist workshop, became a central force in shaping the chapter's identity. Both she and Sharon remain active members today.

### **Membership**

Over the years, the chapter has maintained a small but dedicated circle of singers. Seven members currently form the heart of the group, with four to six regularly singing at bedsides or participating in song offerings.

Among the original members, two to four remain active, depending on how one counts long-time contributors such as Julie and Arleen. The chapter also celebrates the creativity within its ranks—one member has composed songs that are now part of their active repertoire.

### **Singing in Service**

The Modesto Threshold Singers have cultivated a consistent level of service to the community. They offer an average of twelve bedside sings each month, bringing comfort and presence to individuals in their final stages of life. While the chapter does not currently offer song baths, their bedside work remains a central expression of their mission.

The choir practices twice monthly. Their clients come from a range of settings—Board & Care homes, private residences, and skilled nursing facilities—reflecting the chapter's commitment to meeting people wherever they are.

### **Growth and Outreach**

In its early years, the chapter grew organically. Word of mouth carried the message through the community, and a feature in the Modesto Bee helped introduce the Threshold Choir's mission to a wider audience.

New members are welcomed at any time, allowing the group to expand naturally as interest arises.

## **Leadership**

Leadership within the chapter remains intentionally simple. Bernadette serves as choir director and the chapter's unofficial CEO, guiding rehearsals and organizational decisions. Beyond this central role, the chapter operates without formal committees or additional leadership positions, relying instead on shared commitment and mutual support.

## **Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The arrival of COVID-19 brought profound changes to the chapter's work. Bedside singing at the Alexander Cohen Hospice House, once a weekly practice, was suspended for safety reasons. Yet the singers remained connected. They met weekly on Zoom, continuing to sing together across digital space. When conditions allowed, they gathered outdoors in local parks, maintaining their musical bond while honoring public health needs.

Despite the challenges, the chapter's spirit endured. Their adaptability during the pandemic reflected the same compassion and resilience that defines their bedside singing.

## **A Continuing Legacy of Comfort and Song**

Today, the Modesto Threshold Singers Chapter stands as a testament to the power of community, intention, and song. From its beginnings in a weekend workshop to its ongoing service across the region, the chapter continues to offer presence, comfort, and peace—one voice, one breath, one bedside at a time.

Monthly Practice Session. May 19, 2024.

Back row L to R: Linda McFelter, Lorrie Frietas, Karen Odell

Middle row L to R: Julie Tenbrink, Gay Walters, Arleen Allsup, Bernadette Burns, Carol Steed

Seated L to R: Sue Richardson, Sharon Arpoika, Kim Watson



January 25, 2025.