

## THRESHOLD SINGERS OF ANN ARBOR

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#### WHAT IS THRESHOLD CHOIR?

The Threshold Choir honors the ancient tradition of women singing at the bedsides of people who are struggling, some with living, some with dying. We send a small group of singers to offer soothing songs to anyone who requests our singing (and their family and caregivers). Our repertoire is chosen to respond to individual needs and spiritual direction. The Threshold Singers of Ann Arbor is a chapter of the international Threshold Choir. Our website, [www.thresholdofannarbor.org](http://www.thresholdofannarbor.org), includes an introduction for the public (including potential recipients and their families), along with contact information for singing requests, membership, and donations.

The Threshold Choir organization was founded in 2000 and includes over 150 chapters in this country and over 20 chapters abroad. Its website, [www.thresholdchoir.org](http://www.thresholdchoir.org), includes both a public section with a great deal of information about the choir – its mission, history, and music – and a members-only section with a plethora of resources about choir events, workshops, and new songs. A list of additional chapters in Michigan and in other locations may be found at <https://thresholdchoir.org/general-content/chapters-region>. The two chapters closest to Ann Arbor are the Grand Rapids Threshold Choir and the Detroit Area Threshold Singers.

## WHAT WE OFFER

### WHAT SONGS DO WE SING?

Many of our songs are composed specifically for Threshold Choirs to sing. They are short, soothing, and comforting, and are sung softly, to encourage a feeling of peace and rest. We choose songs appropriate to each situation. You can hear examples from the large Threshold Choir repertoire (500+ songs) at <https://thresholdchoir.org/general-content/media> and on YouTube. Most songs are nonsectarian; some come from a variety of religious and spiritual traditions.

### HOW DO THRESHOLD SINGERS GET ASKED TO SING AT A BEDSIDE?

We take requests from anyone who would like to be sung to, whether they are in their own home or a care facility. When the request comes from a caregiver, family member, or facility staff member, our Singing Request Coordinator confirms that the song recipient is likely to be comfortable hearing us sing, whether or not the recipient can communicate directly.

### WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR ARRANGING A BEDSIDE SING?

Call or email TSAA to arrange a bedside sing:

- 734-531-7960 (Note: If no one answers, the phone will ring for about 25 seconds. Please be patient and wait for the greeting to leave a message.)
- [thresholdofaa@gmail.com](mailto:thresholdofaa@gmail.com)

After the Singing Request Coordinator receives a request, a Song Mother is designated for the recipient. She is the one who will be the contact for the family, choose the repertoire, and lead the songs. She will finalize the bedside singing arrangements. Bedside singing groups usually consist of two to four singers. We can also provide ongoing singing for the recipient.

Our singers usually gather away from the recipient for 20–30 minutes to warm up. Then we are taken by a family member or facility staff member to the recipient's bedside, and we ask that the caregiver remain available to provide any assistance that the recipient might need. Singing softly and gently, like a mother singing lullabies to a child, we sing for 20 to 30 minutes. We leave quietly, often while singing our final song.

We have an ongoing relationship with Arbor Hospice, and also sing at hospitals, nursing homes, other facilities, and private homes.

### WHAT DOES IT COST TO HAVE SINGERS COME TO THE BEDSIDE?

Nothing. Our singers are honored to be able to offer our songs.

### HOW MAY I SUPPORT THE WORK OF THRESHOLD SINGERS OF ANN ARBOR?

We sometimes receive donations, which are gratefully accepted. TSAA is a 501(c)(3) organization, so donations are tax-deductible. Donations help pay for our rehearsal space, printing and website costs, national conference fees, and a modest stipend for our rehearsal leaders. Donate using the button at the bottom of the [Contact page](#) on our website.

### DO SINGERS SING AT OTHER PLACES AND TIMES IN ADDITION TO BEDSIDES?

We are occasionally invited by families to sing at funerals or memorial services. We may also be invited to Hospice memorial services or bereavement groups to share the gift of our singing. Sometimes we are

asked to demonstrate bedside singing to caregiver or support groups who may wish to request singing for recipients in the future. When able, we meet these requests with ten to twenty minutes of song. We do not give performances or concerts.

### **WHAT IS THE GIFT OF SONG EVENT?**

We sometimes offer a “Gift of Song” – a gathering open to the public in which we share our music in a quiet reflective setting. The second half of the gathering includes teaching some of our songs so everyone in attendance can sing along. Check our website or contact the Membership Coordinator for the date of the next Gift of Song (this event is currently on hiatus because of covid).

## **JOINING THRESHOLD SINGERS OF ANN ARBOR**

### **WHO CAN JOIN THE THRESHOLD SINGERS?**

If you have longed to use your voice in service, can find the balance between confidence and humility about your voice, and are willing to contemplate mortality (your own and others'), this kind of singing may be for you. Many singers join in gratitude for the gift that singing has been in their lives.

The first step in your decision may be the shiver down your spine when you first hear of our work. A trained voice is not necessary, but you must meet the following requirements:

1. You have a pleasant singing voice and can sing in tune.
2. You can hold your part (pitch and rhythm) in multiple-part singing.
3. You can blend your voice and sing softly with others.
4. You can communicate kindness with your singing and spoken voice.
5. You are willing to receive feedback about your voice and learn our bedside protocols.
6. You commit to memorizing the music and words of our songs through regularly attending rehearsals, and by singing often throughout the week, alone and/or with other members.
7. You attend an orientation that explains the essentials of bedside singing, including contemplating your own and others' mortality and becoming comfortable with it.

### **WHAT IF I FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH MY SINGING?**

In order to convey comfort, you and those singing with you need to feel comfortable with your singing.

If you have difficulty knowing if you are singing on the correct pitch, singing independently, feeling the beat and rhythm, staying on a particular part during a round, or blending with other voices, we suggest giving yourself the gift of private or group voice lessons with a vocal coach before joining. A commitment to voice lessons may help you to gain skills and confidence.

### **HOW DO I JOIN?**

If you are interested in joining, first read “Overview: Joining and Becoming a Bedside Singer.” Then contact our Membership Coordinator at (734) 531-7960 or [thresholdofaa@gmail.com](mailto:thresholdofaa@gmail.com). She will let you know when we will next be inviting potential new singers to explore joining. You will be provided with

the detailed process at that time.

### **WHAT PERSONAL COMMITMENT IS REQUIRED?**

Your personal commitment includes: attending rehearsals regularly, completing the required orientation program, learning and practicing the music through regular singing and listening, and learning about our bedside practices and expectations.

In addition, we ask that each member commit to looking at mortality – her own and others'. Some have faced death themselves or have been with friends or family during the dying process. Others read, talk, journal, sing, create art, or spend time in nature to ponder impermanence. Reading about or taking a course on death and dying, completing the Five Wishes (or another living will), or hospice volunteer training are some of the ways our members have found to ponder mortality.

### **WHAT FINANCIAL COMMITMENT IS INVOLVED?**

Each member purchases the repertoire book (\$20–25) when she joins. In addition, she is expected to make donations that are both affordable and generous to both the international and local organizations. Both groups are 501(c)(3) organizations, so donations to them are tax-deductible.

The international membership donation is paid at the time of joining and annually thereafter (\$52 is the recommended minimum, but it is flexible based on your ability to contribute). Donations can be made by check to Threshold Choir or by PayPal or credit card on the international website.

The local donations are given at rehearsals in cash or via check made out to Threshold Singers of Ann Arbor, or by mail, automatic bank payment, or PayPal via the local website. We rely on member donations that average \$25–30 per month. Some members give more and some give less. No one is ever turned away for inability to make a financial contribution. Ongoing regular donations are appreciated and used to support the group's needs, such as rehearsal space rental and paying our rehearsal leaders.

### **WHAT ARE REHEARSALS LIKE?**

We start our rehearsals promptly and appreciate promptness. We sit in a circle and begin with warm-ups, then take time to quiet and center. With our peaceful songs and quiet singing, we create the kind of sacred space that we want to bring to our bedside singing. We practice songs in 3-part harmony and rounds. We often spend part of rehearsal singing in groups of 3 or 4, to practice in the way we sing at bedsides. We include exercises to develop bedside singing abilities. We put a reclining chair in the center of the circle, so singers can take turns experiencing what it feels like to be sung to.

### **WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO LEARN THE MUSIC AFTER I'VE JOINED?**

Basic ways of learning are listening and singing along with the CDs or recordings on the Threshold Choir website, attending rehearsals and small group practice sessions, and playing the music on a keyboard or instrument if you are able. You may record songs at rehearsal for your personal use. When listening, you are learning the songs at a very deep level! Singing daily – in the car, while cooking, cleaning, gardening, taking a shower – or meeting with a few Threshold friends to sing together are great ways to have the songs go deep into your singing memory. Take time to look in the songbook occasionally to see you are singing the correct words, pitches, and rhythms. If you don't read music, you can still check the words and rely more on the CD and the website recordings.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **Threshold Singers of Ann Arbor: Singing Requests, Membership Inquiries, or Other Inquiries**

- Phone: 734-531-7960 (Note: If no one answers, the phone will ring for about 25 seconds. Please be patient and wait for the greeting to leave a message.)
- Email: [thresholdofaa@gmail.com](mailto:thresholdofaa@gmail.com)
- Website: [thresholdofannarbor.org](http://thresholdofannarbor.org)

**Threshold Singers of Ann Arbor (also called Threshold Choir of Ann Arbor) is a 501(c)(3) organization.**

### **Main Office of Threshold Choir International**

P.O. Box 8496

Santa Rosa CA 95407

(707) 596-8531

[office@thresholdchoir.org](mailto:office@thresholdchoir.org)

website: [thresholdchoir.org](http://thresholdchoir.org)

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