

## START HERE

*“Since everyone loves, dies and grieves, everyone is welcome to sing at bedsides. The Threshold Choir welcomes choral singers of any background, racial makeup, gender and preference and expression, cultural tradition and spiritual understanding. We ask that you can sing already or that you will make a significant effort to learn; we will make every effort to insure that you feel safe, included, trained and ready to sing at bedsides with us. We welcome you.”*

*Kate Munger, May, 2020*

Welcome to the Threshold Choir International Curriculum on issues related to diversity and singing together! It is our hope that international and U.S. chapters will find useful resources here, enhancing your ability as individual singers and groups to interact effectively and wholeheartedly with others you encounter while engaged in TCI singing.

The curriculum is divided into several parts; each outlining background information, exercises, video or other links, and recommendations for those who wish to go beyond the basic scope of resources included here.

There are many ways to approach and use the material in this curriculum. To start, you may want to ask:

- What will help us be our best selves?
- What will help us become more aware?
- What will be most useful, intriguing, engaging to our members?

(Please see “Using the Modules” for more information.)

**We ask all who use the manual to complete the Intersectionality module before moving on to other sections.** This request allows everyone to enter this process understanding its complexity and recognizing that what may be their most important and useful part of the curriculum may be vastly different for other members of their chapters, people for whom we sing, and our interactions with others in our cities, states, and nations.

After that, there are many places and ways to start and proceed with raising awareness and understanding around the issues of cultural diversity, equity and inclusion. You could:

- Start with a single question;
- Read a single article or watch a single video;
- Use an already-created module, for one or several sessions;
- Let topics emerge, based on the desires of the group

We encourage flexibility as you decide how to approach and use this material.

We encourage you to allow leadership to come from members as well as directors.

**Preparing to Use the Curriculum** (Please see "Using the Modules" for more information.)

When we are called to a bedside sing, we know how important it is to prepare. We already have ways to quiet our mind and relax our body so as to settle our nervous system. This enables us to arrive at the sing and be fully present with compassion and lovingkindness for whatever arises. As Kathy Leo says in her beautiful book, *On the Breath of Song*, (p. 34)

*"We remember that we are going to someone's bedside, a place that will call forth all of our best qualities. It will be the only place we are. All of the chatter in our heads can rest."*

It is this embodied practice of presence that we have woven into the curriculum. For some of the modules, we have created a centering practice as the starting point. We invite you to adapt them or develop your own. And of course, starting with a song is always a good way to begin. What is important is to provide time and space to feel into the sensations of the body - to what is arising - as you start this work.

You also will find questions within the modules that invite you from time to time to check in with your body as you discuss the material. Doing so will help move the experience from an intellectual, knowledge based one to a more fully embodied one. Acknowledging feelings and sensations in the body are as important here as they are with bedside singing. It is all of a piece, enabling us to grow and deepen our compassion for ourselves and others.

### **Choices and Resources**

Consider choosing the portion of the module that most resonates with your own important identity (ies) and work through it. If you are working with a small group or chapter, each member should complete this second step and be prepared to offer any additional information your larger group might need as you move through the process together.

The additional resources for each section have been chosen with care from among hundreds recommended by the Task Force and TCI members. Please note that this body of literature and resources will continue to increase, and you might want to return to look at new options available to you in the future.

### **Self-Care**

Most importantly, be gentle with yourself as you enter and move through this process. Some of this information will be new, some may engender feelings you have not had to deal with before. Feel free to reach out to others to discuss the new insights and responses you are having to doing this work. Even those members of our Task Force who have been engaged in diversity work for decades have found something new to unpack as we carefully prepared these sections for you. This is a lifelong learning process; allow yourself to move through it with gentle inquiry.