

Festival of Faith Comes to Christ Cathedral on Saturday, October 26

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Children's and Adult Choirs Join Together to Learn and Perform in 36th Event

Sublime music, the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to sing under the leadership of the music director of the Mormon's Tabernacle Choir, and the chance to perform in Christ Cathedral.

These are all part of the Fall Festival of Faith, which takes place on Saturday, October 26 and draws about 800 members of children's and adult choirs from Southern California and beyond, including members of both the Protestant and Catholic faith traditions who will learn and sing together.

"The Fall Festival of Faith will be a thrilling day for every single person involved," says John Romeri, the Christ Cathedral organist and director of music, who assisted the Mark Thallander Foundation in planning and producing the 36th annual event.

"We've been waiting for the Cathedral to open, so this year is especially significant because it will come to Christ Cathedral," Romeri said. "It's going to be really wonderful."

Conducting the choirs is Mack Wilberg, American composer, arranger, conductor, and choral clinician who has served as music director of the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square since 2008.

The Palm Springs-based foundation founded by Thallander – a former organist who helped grow the music program at Crystal Cathedral from 1976 to 1993 – uses the power of music to grow faith and connect communities. The Festival of Faith has been held in Hawaii, Palm Springs, Los Angeles, and in other locations; this is its first time at Christ Cathedral, which was dedicated on July 17.

About 200 children from fourth to 12th grades, who make up the Diocesan Children's Choir, the National Children's Chorus and the All-American Boys Chorus, will join nearly 600 adults from almost 20 church choirs from as far away as Stockton, Lompoc, Menlo Park, and locations throughout Southern California.

Prior to the prelude, which heralds the first notes of the choirs' ecumenical performance at 1:45 p.m., Melissa Weidner will give a concert performance on the Arvella Schuller Carillon. It can be heard outside the cathedral beginning at 12:15 p.m.

The program consists of readings and sacred music in several faith traditions, Romeri says, and musicians will be accompanied by a brass ensemble as well as David Ball, Christ Cathedral organist, and the Sts. Simon and Jude Church Handbell Choir from Huntington Beach.

Special participants in Saturday's event, noted Romeri, are Robert and Donna Schuller, who will offer the litany of thanksgiving. Robert A. Schuller is an author, televangelist and pastor and the only son of Crystal Cathedral founders Robert H. Schuller and Arvella Schuller. In addition, former Crystal Cathedral organist and music director Fred Swann will play the organ and another former Crystal Cathedral organist Richard Unfried will give a reading.

"For all of us to be back in the iconic building is very special," said Mark Thallander, the foundation's namesake. "It's where we spent so many hours, for me playing the Hazel Wright Organ for pageants, weddings, celebrations and funerals, and it is so impressive how the Catholic Church has taken what was there and restored it to last for decades."

"The Fall Festival of Faith is a real celebration of faith," Romeri notes, "offering participants a rare opportunity to learn from a master conductor, to make new connections, to pray and sing together in an ecumenical service in the beautiful Christ Cathedral."

Organizers anticipate a nearly full Cathedral for the afternoon performance, which is free of charge. A free-will offering will be collected to help with expenses. Those who arrive early or stay late can visit Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel exhibit and the Christ Cathedral Shop, both located in the Cultural Center, or take self-guided tours through the campus.

For more information, contact the Diocese of Orange Music Ministry office at 714-620-7912 or the Mark Thallander Foundation at 626-487-0224.

MEDIA: A media pass is required to enter the Cathedral and the grounds. Please contact: Tkincaid@rcbo.org or Cmontes@rcbo.org if you plan on covering this event.

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