

Candlelight at Disneyland



Christian Edition Men's Chorus participates in the Candlelight Procession at Disneyland in early December 2025.

By Craig Vendouris,
Baritone



Every once in a while, Christian Edition gets to do something special outside of our regular concert schedule. We've sung at sports stadiums, on a few television programs, at a hotel, and even in a conference room underneath a casino in Las Vegas. One of those unique opportunities took place for us in early December 2025, at the self-proclaimed "Happiest Place on Earth"—Disneyland.

Every December for the last 67 years, Disneyland has hosted the Candlelight Processional. This sacred Christmas concert began as a "thank you" from Walt Disney to local

dignitaries and continues to be performed for corporate sponsors of Disneyland, members of the exclusive Club 33, and other select guests.

The annual concert celebration of the birth of Jesus takes place twice on two nights at the beginning of December. There is a massive choir of over 400 singers, an orchestra, a handbell choir, herald trumpeters, a couple of select soloists, and a celebrity narrator, who all take their places on a specially built stage on the steps of the Disneyland Railroad Station at the foot of Main Street USA. It should be noted that this is a purely sacred concert with all songs focused on the events of the birth of Jesus. There are no songs about Rudolph, Frosty, or

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From the Keyboard

By Michael Spencer,
Director



A few weeks ago, one of our first tenors, Ian Lafferty, passed away unexpectedly in his sleep. Our Christian Edition family has suffered several heavy losses this past year—losing a father, mother, son, daughter, and friend. Death is no stranger to our email chains. Yet, as the news of Ian’s passing spread through our group, a familiar comfort emerged: almost every reply or text quoted lyrics from our music as we navigated this sudden sorrow together. The two songs echoed most often were “Soon & Very Soon” and “No More Night.”

We miss Ian deeply; his bright, pure spirit was a cheering light in our rehearsals and worship services. The practices following his passing were heavy with emotion. We found ourselves singing those familiar anthems of comfort and reassurance, working to prepare them for the public—striving to sing with genuine feeling, but without being entirely overwhelmed by our own grief. The hope woven into these songs, which we have sung for decades, remains the very fuel and fire that drives the Christian Edition family forward.

Over the past 45 years, we have said goodbye to many members—some to the sleep of death, and others to more mundane transitions like retirement, career moves, or changing health. But for as long as Christian Edition has existed, we have gathered every five years for a reunion. We have met at Glendale High, Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills, Loma Linda University Church, and even on cruises to Alaska and the Caribbean. For a brief, beautiful window of time, the CE family reunites to sing the healing songs of hope that are our true bread and butter.

This year is no different. On September 19, 2026, at 4:30 PM in the Loma Linda University

Seventh-day Adventist Church, we will gather once again to sing the familiar songs of hope and comfort. We will sing favorite songs, tell colorful stories, look at memorable pictures, and say hello to a few special guests. Join us for this special one-of-a-kind reunion worship service that will warm your hearts and raise your spirits!



Grief Is...

By Lois Wheeler



A number of the Christian Edition family have suffered the loss of a loved one in the past several years, including the loss of our dear, long-time director, Calvin Knipschild, in late 2021. Just a few short months ago, second tenor, Russ Nelson, and his wife, Paulette, lost their daughter, Kelly Strain. On April 5, one of our former bass singers, Gary

Gifford, passed away, and a few weeks later, current first tenor, Ian Lafferty, passed away in his sleep. As a result, the remaining family members are learning to navigate a new version of their lives.

On February 18, 2025, my husband Darryl, who sings bass with Christian Edition, and I lost our son, Timothy. He was only 27. He left behind a grieving family and so many friends who question "Why?" he passed at such a young age.

Many of you will remember the cartoons from the 70's called *Love is....* which featured a cute couple with a clever saying. I will use that idea to give you a glimpse into some of the everyday things that those of us who are grieving might struggle with.

Grief is seeing your loved one's favorite food in the grocery store and adding it to your cart without realizing you have done so. It's birthdays and holidays, and the empty chair at the table of family gatherings. It's hearing a song they loved or the one that was sung at their service. It's someone sharing a story or experience with you that your loved one was included in. It's watching their favorite sport or sports team, or the team they coached.

Grief is saying your loved one's name and saving space for them. Grief invades parts of

your life that you never expected. New Year's celebrations take on a different tone when the festivities are for a year of which your beloved will not be a part.

When you speak to someone who has suffered a loss, it's okay to say their loved one's name. There is a common misconception that in doing so, you are reminding us that our beloved has passed. I assure you, you aren't. We haven't forgotten, we can't forget. And while we may shed a tear, it will be one of joy mixed with sorrow that you are remembering them. This can bring our broken hearts small moments of joy. Another misunderstanding is that we will someday move on from the loss, but in many ways, we never will, because our loved one will always be gone.

Navigating grief is different for everyone and for every loss. No experience is the same.

We are so fortunate to have the hope of the resurrection and return of our dear Jesus, who will call His children to awake and be reunited with their families and friends. Each day that passes, we are one day closer to that joyous day.

"For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 RSV).

Community Gathering

By Amithy Smith



A Haven on the Hill: Music and Ministry

Christian Edition's final two concerts of 2025 took place in California—one at The Haven SDA Church in Elmhaven near Pacific Union College in Angwin, and the other at the Hayward SDA Church, a few hours south of the Napa Valley.

At both stops, communities gathered to listen to beautiful, spiritually filled music.

Beyond the music, this trip reminded us that Christian Edition is a praying ministry just as much as it is a men's chorus. In Elmhaven, we reconnected with old friends from our home church in San Bernardino. We also met a woman carrying heavy family concerns. When I asked, "Can I pray for you?" she gratefully accepted.

Worshiping God through music brings joy to our hearts. As Christian Edition sang, the words of hope and promise warmed souls, lifted spirits, and drew people closer to Jesus. These songs of love, mercy, and grace preach gentle sermons that remind us of Christ's sacrifice, our salvation, and our heavenly destination.

I kept calling the church on the hill in Elmhaven "heaven," but it was truly a haven on a hill. Nestled in beautiful mountain scenery, the winding roads still bore charred remnants of past fires which is a poignant reminder that we are still on an earth where beauty is temporary and sin exists.

Nevertheless, the songs reminded me that wherever we are, in a haven or among charred mountains, there will be no mistaking an earthly haven for the eternal heaven. This is the place from which we will "See Your Lord a-Coming" with hosts of angels. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). Let us keep that heavenly joy in our hearts daily.

From Sweet to Savory: Fellowship at the Table

Following the worship, the community gathered for fellowship. "Give the people something to

eat," Jesus once told the disciples. It is no secret that Christian Edition singers love to eat; if they had been present when Jesus fed the five thousand, they would have been right in line! We are all welcome to the community gathering just as Jesus invites everyone to the heavenly feast, to sit

at the table and enjoy fellowship with our host, Jesus Christ.

So why did I transition from singing to food? Because both bring us immense joy. Just as we appreciate diverse musical genres, we enjoy a variety of flavors. We listen to lyrics and they touch our hearts; we look at a beautifully spread table, and our eyes prime our taste buds. On an international flight once, the flight attendants asked before every meal, "Would you like sweet or savory?" Music, like food, balances both.

The Savory: We sing of Christ's trials, crucifixion, and His warning in Matthew 5:11: "Blessed are



The Haven SDA Church

ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake..."

The Sweetness: We sing of His resurrection, His death to save us from sin, and the ultimate sweetness of His promise: "Great is your reward in Heaven." The sweetness of his love propels us to share the good news with others.



His love pursues us, as Jeremiah 31:3 reminds us: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." We are drawn to these gatherings by our love for music, and to the welcoming tables of churches where we share faith, food, family, and fellowship. And we are drawn to Jesus through the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Think about "eating" the Word of God and what it does to our spiritual taste buds. I think about people chewing on lyrics fed in the form of messages that are driven straight to the heart. The response is pure, authentic worship—clapping, crying out in personal despair or awe, and praising the Lord for sending Jesus to die for us. As John 1:14 states, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us..." Because He lived among us, we are encouraged to live for Him while we wait for His glorious appearance.

A Taste of the Heavenly Feast

Three local congregations—The Haven, St. Helena, and Calistoga SDA churches—converged to prepare a bountiful lunch. Unlike Peter's vision on the rooftop, this food was beautifully prepared and ready to enjoy. It was a

true exercise in temperance—how could anyone choose from such an abundance? Every dish was prepared with love.

Afterward, one woman shared that she always prays over the food she prepares. The whole experience offered a glimpse of what heaven will be like. Wherever Jesus went on earth, there was a diverse community of people around Him—believers, the curious, and the critics alike.

Yet, Jesus always made room at His table, even sitting with Judas, Peter, and the disciples who would soon abandon Him. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Even if these words did not touch the hearts of those who plotted against Him, He still had room in His heart, and at His table, for them. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

We enjoyed our meal in a fellowship hall near The Haven. We received far more than loaves and fishes; no one left hungry. Just as the disciples gathered twelve baskets of leftovers, there was enough food for us to pack carryout containers to sustain us on our drive back to Southern California the next day.



The generosity continued at our next venue in Hayward, where church members provided a late, large supper. Despite the long, tiring day, CE stayed to sing a song of thanksgiving to bless those who had cooked for us.

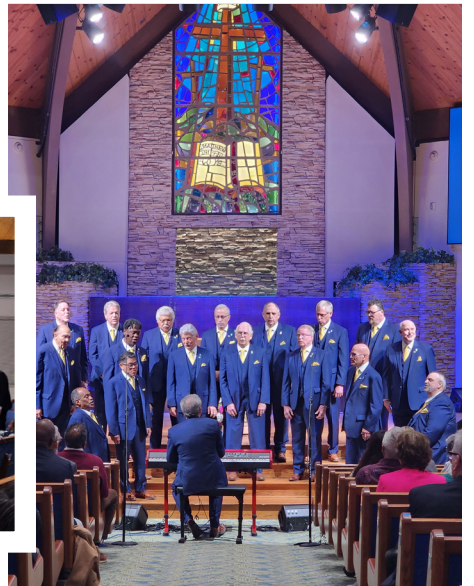
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Photo Album

Lodi Fairmont SDA Church – September 20 Stockton Central SDA Church – September 20



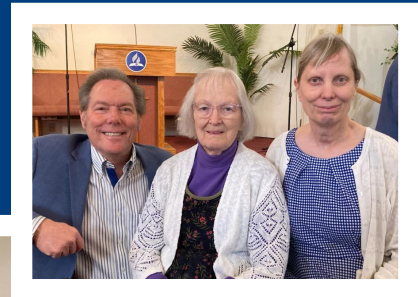
Azure Hills SDA Church – January 24



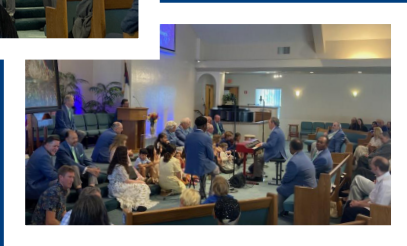
Palm Springs SDA Church – February 21



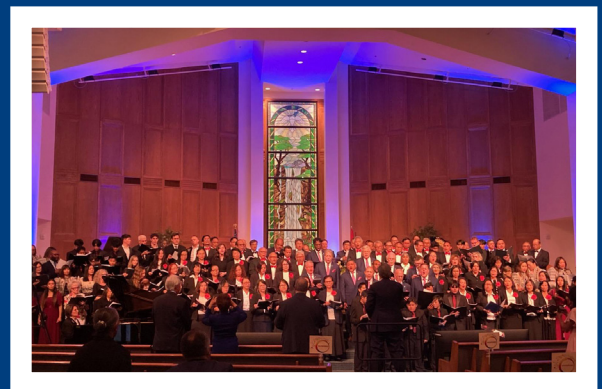
Desert Hot Springs SDA Church – February 21



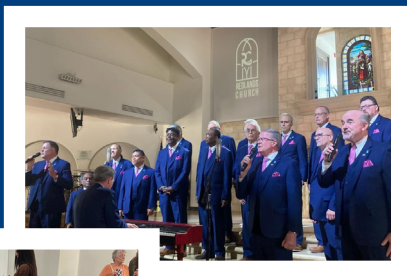
Fallbrook SDA Church – March 21



Loma Linda University Health 4th Annual Sacred Choir Festival – April 18



Redlands SDA Church – April 18



Candlelight, continued from page 1

Santa. There are traditional songs such as “The First Noel,” “Silent Night,” etc., as well as a few new arrangements and songs that fit in perfectly.

In order to be part of this amazing event, groups must audition and be selected. CE auditioned in September and was accepted for the December concert. Participants were required to attend one of three rehearsals in Burbank, Fullerton, and Aliso Viejo.



On the day of the event we arrived early in the afternoon, just after lunchtime, in our Disney-mandated black pants, black shoes, and white shirts. We checked

in, received our gold choir robes, and headed straight to the rehearsal hall, which is the currently empty Captain EO Theater underneath Space Mountain. We had to walk there in an area reserved for cast members, so we were allowed to peek behind the proverbial curtain for just a bit.

The amount of organization required for an event as big as this is akin to planning to climb Mount Everest, and no one pulls off things of that size better than Disney. We were assigned positions when we checked in and found our well-marked spots inside the rehearsal theater.



Clockwise from back left: Basses Brandon Wolfe, Patrick Wolfe, Walt Nelson, Keith Smith, and Chris Sheridan.



Left to right: Soprano Diane Sheridan, and altos Marie Shogren, Tami Mitchell, and Joanna Recalde.



Back row: Tenors Amithy Smith, Ian Lafferty, and Henry Murray. Front row: Bass Aaron Recalde, and tenors Noah Recalde and Francis Recalde.

We had a two hour long rehearsal, led by the very demanding but jovial director, Nancy Sulahian. She knows her stuff thoroughly, something all musicians appreciate, and she demanded excellence from us.

There's always a big mystery each year about who the celebrity narrator will be. In the past, it's been people with a distinct Disney connection such as Julie Andrews, Dick Van Dyke, Kurt Russell, Gary Sinise, and Marie Osmond. We found out during rehearsal that this year's narrator was to be Benjamin Bratt, an actor who has a solid resume, and was part of the voice cast for the animated film *Coco* (ask your grandkids about him).

The time to assemble finally arrived. We were called outside in order by our rows, and given an electric candle. We marched down Main Street, following the traditional Disney parade route starting at It's a Small World and ending on the steps of the Main Street train station. We sang traditional sacred Christmas songs as we marched along. Once our massive choir was finally set in place, the lights came on, the herald trumpets thundered, Nancy waved her hands, and we were off and running. We sang a total of nine songs, which included a duet with two singers and a guitarist, and an amazing soloist on "Silent Night." The final three songs—"Silent Night," "Joy to the World," and the "Hallelujah Chorus" were far more emotional than any of us anticipated, and as a handful of us talked about it after the first concert, our eyes filled with tears.



Benjamin Bratt, movie and TV actor, narrated the Candlelight Processional.

It's rare for CE to sing with women, so when the chance to do so comes along, it's truly special. I'm telling you, the women who were part of this 400-voice chorus were beyond excellent. If you're familiar with the "Hallelujah Chorus," you know that the soprano part is very demanding. That night, it was sung to perfection, and it was a blessing to hear it performed in such a professional and powerful way. In fact, there was an unexpected bonus to this song. At the very end, there's a momentary pause before we sing the final four notes. During that pause, we could hear the most amazing reverb I can ever recall hearing, as the notes traveled right down Main Street. The audience was dead silent, so that enhanced the effect even more. As the song ended and the final notes lingered, the PA announcer thanked the appropriate individuals, and we were all ushered off the stage and then marched back to the rehearsal theater for a quick dinner break.

The best news of the night was knowing we were going to get to do this all over again. We reassembled and took our places, marched out, got our candles, headed back down Main Street, took our places, and off we went with the second concert. At the end of the "Hallelujah

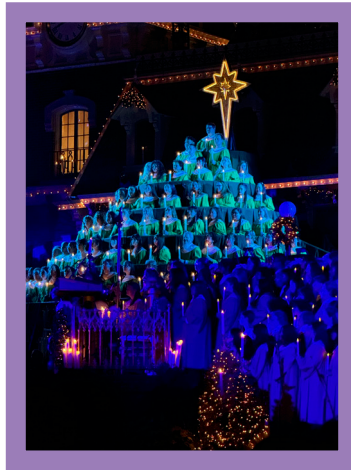


Post Candlelight gathering in the Esplanade.

Candlelight, *continued from page 9*

Chorus" for the second show, the reverb down Main Street was somehow even better. That alone was worth hearing again.

As the second concert ended, the efficiency experts hired by Disney were ready with three things: a big box to collect our choir robes, a smaller box to collect our candles, and someone to give us a ticket to re-enter the park for the rest of the night, if we so desired. I had made arrangements with my family to meet inside the park, so after taking a few group pictures with CE in the esplanade between both Disney parks, my buddy, Fred Miller, and I turned around and re-entered the park. We headed to the tropical oasis outside the Jungle Cruise to meet my wife and daughter for some much-needed Dole Whip.



We found them at a table, and as we sat down, my daughter, who had listened to me practice an endless number of times for this concert, and knew the songs as well as I did, looked me square in the eyes and said the most meaningful words of the night to me: "Dad, that was spectacular!" (Many of the accompanying pictures with this article were taken by her).

While this wasn't our typical concert experience, it was meaningful and spiritual in a setting that most people wouldn't expect possible. We hope that many were blessed that night and that we'll be able to do this again next year.

If you're interested in watching the program, please go to YouTube and search "Disneyland Candlelight Processional 2025."

Gathering, *continued from page 4*

This abundance wasn't just about food; it was about the profound generosity of God's people. Matthew 18:18 says, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." When you are immersed in a community that loves God, you feel the tangible love they give of themselves. It is a microcosm of heaven, and I don't think we will dare insult God's celestial bounty by calling it a "potluck", though I suspect God has a great sense of humor about it!

The Ultimate Welcome Table

I look forward to the day when earthly church lunches and potlucks are no longer needed. All the hospitality teams who toil faithfully in church kitchens around the world will finally get their just desserts. At the grand "Welcome Table" in heaven, they will not be working in the kitchen,

or rushing to serve Christian Edition, or any other guests. They will be the seated guests of honor! They will be front and center when our Father sings, "Welcome Home, Children." Just like the music of heaven, salvation and the ultimate welcome table are for everyone. It would be a tragedy to sing about heavenly music and never experience it. Whether we love Jesus or not, He loves us and fulfilled the plan of salvation for us. We will all fasten our thoughts on being in the presence of God and Jesus, and eating from the bounties of their love.

May God help us hold fast in faith and hope until that glorious day when we gather in heaven to sing praises to Jesus, eat from the Tree of Life, and bask forever in the wonders of His glory.

**All Bible texts are quoted from the King James Version.*

Coming Home...Going Home

By Rob Peterson
1st Tenor



Christian Edition got to “come home” on Sabbath, May 16, 2026.

We were invited to present the worship service at Eagle Rock SDA Church. (As many of you may know, this is where it all started with a group of 16 men under the leadership of Calvin Knipschild in 1981. They sang the song “Nearer, Still Nearer”

as a birthday present for their pastor, Jim Brown). It was a beautiful service full of amazing music and many memories. It was wonderful to see our own CE kids, Krista (Miller) McHale and her sister, Janelle Miller, taking a lead in the service. Krista introduced CE and is such a natural up on stage.

Coming home had some sadness as we were really missing our youngest member, Ian Lafferty, who had suddenly passed away just a few short weeks earlier. The sanctuary holds memories of those who have gone before us: Calvin, Conrad, LaMarr, Sonny, Al, Joyce, Richard, and so many more who were part of our CE family. The songs we sang reminded us that “Soon and VERY Soon” we are going to be reunited. That hope is such an amazing gift from our heavenly Father. After the worship service, CE was blessed with an amazing luncheon with a Filipino flair.

Later that day, I really got to “go home” as Christian Edition was scheduled to sing at the 55-plus community, Friendly Valley, in Santa Clarita, where I live. We sang here over a year ago, and the residents of the community were anxious to have us back. The community hall was filling up early, and as we walked out, there were

so many smiling faces that I recognized from around the community. God’s glorious music filled the hall that hosts board meetings, Bingo on Wednesdays, community shows, dances, and parties. It was such a blessing to present the amazing Gospel of Jesus through music to my neighbors.

After the concert, I invited the guys and several neighbors over to the house for a meal and fellowship. It is so much fun just hanging out



Eagle Rock SDA Church



Friendly Valley

with this group of men and their families. Dick Sample told me he would bring some fudge—he makes the best fudge in the world! He showed up with five or six full trays of fudge! Needless to say, everyone who wanted fudge went home with a lot of fudge! All were so blessed by the music, fudge, and fellowship. I can’t wait for the day we will really be home, sitting in the yard with Calvin, sipping mango shakes, and preparing for the best Friday night concert ever. Calvin will hand his baton to Jesus, who

will direct the full mass choir of the redeemed. Even so, Lord Jesus, come...quickly!

Attention All Former Members of Christian Edition!

*Christian Edition is celebrating 45 years of music ministry this year, and we invite all former members to join us! If you are able to come, please let us know at **ChristianEdition@SBCGlobal.net** so that we can include you in the plans for the weekend. We look forward to you joining us on the platform in a song or two from your era.*

*Also, if you have photos of former members who have passed away, we would like to include them in an “In Memoriam” slide show during the service. Please send us a digital copy to **Dennis.Shogren@gmail.com**.*

Calendar

CONCERT TIMES OR LOCATIONS MAY CHANGE. PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATED INFORMATION OR CALL AHEAD TO CONFIRM A CONCERT BEFORE TRAVELING LONG DISTANCES. (SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST HAS BEEN ABBREVIATED TO SDA.)

AUGUST 2026

15 Saturday 11:15 AM Special Music
4:00 PM Worship in Song
Calimesa SDA Campmeeting
391 Myrtlewood Drive
Calimesa, CA 92320
(909) 795-9741

SEPTEMBER 2026

19 Saturday 9:00/11:00 AM Special Music
4:30 PM Reunion Vespers
Loma Linda University Church
11125 Campus Street
Loma Linda, CA 92354
(909) 558-4570

OCTOBER 2026

17 Saturday 11:00 AM Worship in Song
Stockton Central SDA Church
1314 N. Madison Street
Stockton, CA 95202
(209) 465-0213

17 Saturday 4:30 PM Worship in Song
Lodi Fairmont SDA Church
730 S. Fairmont Avenue
Lodi, CA 95240
(209) 334-1844

NOVEMBER 2026

21 Saturday 11:00 AM Worship in Song
TBD

21 Saturday PM Worship in Song
TBD

JANUARY 2027

16 Saturday 11:00 AM Worship in Song
TBD

16 Saturday 6:00 PM Worship in Song
St. Anthony's Catholic Church
2110 N. San Antonio Avenue
Upland, CA 91784
(909) 985-2803

FEBRUARY 2027

20 Saturday 10:45 AM Worship in Song
Palm Springs SDA Church
620 S. Sunrise Way
Palm Springs, CA 92264
(760) 327-5112



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