

# Cornerstone Lower Tier

## Member Handbook

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**Purpose Statement**

Cornerstone is a Christian organization that seeks to provide quality education opportunities along with support for families that are homeschooling their students.

Cornerstone is divided into two tiers:

Lower Tier: A co-op type structure where parents provide gym, choir, and enrichment classes for grades K-6, and enrichment classes for grades 7-8. Lower Tier meets 16 weeks each school year. This tier is parent run. All participating students must have a parent who is an active participant in planning, teaching, monitoring and cleaning up. There is no opt-out option for Lower Tier classes.

Upper Tier: A tuition based, teacher taught, 30-week academic program for middle and high school students (grades 7-12). Classes are designed to help parents meet or exceed Pennsylvania homeschool law requirements. Parents at this tier help by providing monitoring supervision (determined by the number of classes their students are taking - up to a maximum of 12 hours a year). A monitor opt-out option is available for a fee.

In both tiers, Cornerstone can provide opportunities for field trips, achievement testing, learning fairs and social events for parents and students, if we have members willing to lead these activities.

\*\*Note: 7-8<sup>th</sup> grade courses are offered by both the Lower and Upper Tier, and students must be enrolled in the tier(s) they desire to take classes in.

## **Financial Statement**

Cornerstone is established as a non-profit corporation under Pennsylvania law. We are also a 501c3 IRS designation that allows tax deductible donations and fundraising.

As a non-profit we are restricted from any political involvement and must meet established fiduciary standards.

The Lower Tier collects an annual fee to cover: co-op supplies, building fees, and membership dues to CHALC (Coalition of Homeschoolers Across Lancaster County). All teaching and monitoring is provided by the member parents.

The Upper Tier collects tuition to pay teachers and expenses during registration in the spring of each year. Upper Tier participants also pay a family fee that covers rent, liability insurance, CHALC membership and general expenses.

Members of both tiers only pay the annual family fee once, usually when they register for Lower Tier in the spring.

## **Statement of Faith**

We believe there is one God and he exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:19, 2 Cor. 13:14)

We believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, died for our sins, rose on the third day and ascended to heaven. It is not by works, but by God's grace, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and putting our faith in him that we are saved and can have eternal salvation. (Isa 7:14, Rom. 4:25, Eph. 2:8-9)

We believe that the Holy Spirit has come to edify the Church and bring it into unity for the glory of God. (Rom. 12:4-5, John 16:7-15, 1 Cor. 12:3-11, 1 Cor. 14:12)

We believe the Bible is the living word of God, infallible, inerrant and the final authority for all matters of faith and conduct. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

We believe that God, in his infinite wisdom, immutably (unchangeably) creates each person to be either male or female. He has designed these two sexes to complement each other as they reflect the image of God. (Gen. 1:26-27)

We believe that marriage is clearly defined in the Bible as the committed union of one man and one woman as created by God. (Gen. 2:18-25)

This statement of faith is the foundation, not the entirety, of our beliefs. It is based on, but not limited to, the scriptures listed above.

## **Membership Information**

### **Leadership**

Cornerstone Upper and Lower Tier Co-Directors and Treasurers make up the acting board of the Cornerstone Cooperative. They maintain the mission of the co-op, meet to set building wide policies and communicate directly with Grace Baptist Church.

The Lower Tier Leadership team is comprised of multiple positions. This team is essential for managing the many member families and coordinating activities so that our co-op days go smoothly. A brief description of the responsibilities of each leadership team member follows:

Co-Directors of Lower Tier-

- Manage communications with members and the church, scheduling, paperwork, discipline, and new and current member registration process. Support the leadership team. This is typically a 4-year term.

Treasurer-

- Manage all financial aspects and recordkeeping for the co-op. This is a 2-year minimum term.

Teacher Coordinator-

- Manage class schedules, class descriptions and teacher sign ups. This is a 2-year minimum term.

Monitor and Cleaning Coordinator-

- Manage the schedules for all monitors and cleaning slots. Is the contact for call outs and substitutions. This is a 2-year minimum term.

Choir Coordinator-

- Manage all music teachers and accompanists. Develop a theme and program for the Spring concert and make arrangements for nursing home concert, if there is

one. Handle all coordination between music classes while communicating with the Directors. Purchase the music class needs (k-6), staying within budget and keeping a log of expenses. This is a 2-year minimum term.

## **General Information**

### **Calendar**

Cornerstone Lower Tier classes are held for eight weeks in the fall and eight weeks in the spring. Classes are held at Grace Baptist Church on Thursday afternoons beginning at 12:15PM and ending around 3:30PM. Each week consists of three 55-minute class periods preceded by announcements and ending with clean-up time.

The first class of the Fall Semester begins on the third Thursday in September. Classes continue for eight weeks on the first, third, fourth and fifth Thursdays of each month. Classes are not held on Thanksgiving.

The Spring Semester begins on the third Thursday of January. Classes continue for eight weeks on the first, third, fourth and fifth Thursdays of each month.

### **Inclement Weather**

In the event of inclement weather, Lower Tier will generally follow the Hempfield School District's lead, however we do not do remote learning. Instead, the Directors will send an email to all members if weather becomes an issue and a delay or closing is required. Please use your own discretion if roads are not acceptable to drive on in your area. We do have a snow make up day built into our yearly calendar following the last regularly scheduled class date.

### **Cyber/Charter Policy**

Our classes are designed to meet the needs of traditionally homeschooled students but we recognize the desire of cyber-school families to occasionally supplement their class work with a Cornerstone class. If class space is available, permission may be granted by the Directors on a case by case basis for cyber/charter school students to participate in Lower Tier.

### **Registration**

A family is considered a member if they complete online registration, submit clearances, and all fees within two weeks of starting the registration process. You will receive an email from leadership instructing you to sign your children up for classes on or after a given date. Any foster children or child living in the same household is considered a member along with the family.

If a member provides full-time childcare and is not able to make other arrangements on co-op Thursdays, we do allow these children to participate in Cornerstone's programs. These children in attendance will need online registration completed by their parents, as well as membership fees paid.

## **Fees and Financial Breakdown**

There is a \$125 fee per family each year: \$100 goes to cover the cost of administration activities, co-op, gym, music supplies, and a donation to Grace Baptist Church for the use of their facility. \$25 goes to CHALC for liability insurance and to pay for our website. Only after all online registration forms, payment, and updated clearances are submitted will you be able to sign your children up for classes when class sign ups open.

All payments for Cornerstone Lower Tier are due within two weeks of starting the registration process. *These fees are non-refundable.* You will not be able to sign your child up for classes until payment has been received.

If you have a personal situation that affects your ability to pay, please notify the Directors. If we have not been contacted and have not received payment by the registration deadline, your family will be removed from the Cornerstone Lower Tier roster.

## **Class Sign Up**

Returning members are encouraged to complete co-op registration early in order to secure a spot for the following year. This will also give returning members the opportunity to sign up for classes earlier than families who register for co-op later. If registering early is a problem, contact the Directors promptly.

Class sign ups will not happen at the time of registration. Every student in Kindergarten through 6th grade will be automatically signed up for their age-appropriate music and gym class. If there is a significant reason why your child is unable to participate in either music or gym class, exemptions will be considered by the leadership team. Parents will only need to sign their child/children up for elective classes. These class sign ups will start on a Monday in April for those who have registered for co-op the earliest. Over the course of the next three days, Tuesday through Thursday, more families will be able to sign up, in order of co-op registration date. Class sign ups do not need to be completed during these four days. These are simply the opening dates for when families may start signing up.

## **Classroom Age Requirements**

*Preschool* classes require that the student be three by September 30<sup>th</sup> of the current school year. No exceptions will be made for students with birthdays shortly after cutoffs. Children who do not meet the age cutoff will be in the Nursery. (See more information below.)

*Kindergarten* classes are offered to students who are five years old by September 30<sup>th</sup> of the current school year. No exceptions will be made for students with birthdays shortly after cutoffs regardless of readiness or ability.

*7-8<sup>th</sup> grade* classes are designated for students in grades 7-8. We do not have set age requirements for these classes and feel that the homeschool parent is best equipped to determine readiness for upper level classes. Teachers of these classes will hold higher expectations and have the right to recommend that younger students not register for their classes.

## **Clearances**

Clearance paperwork: PA Child Abuse History Clearance and PA Criminal Record Check (and FBI Clearance for those residing outside of Pennsylvania within the last ten years) must be submitted by all new members prior to participation in Lower Tier. Clearances must be renewed every five years from the date of issue.

## **Co-Op Class Days**

### **Attendance**

At least one parent is required to attend “Parent Meeting” before classes begin in the fall.

Cornerstone membership includes a commitment to the co-op. Attendance should be a priority for your family. If possible, try to schedule vacations during the second week of each month when we do not hold classes, or over breaks. All members are expected to attempt to find their own substitutes for teaching, monitoring and cleaning responsibilities. Students are responsible for making up any missed work while absent. If they know in advance they will be out they should notify their teacher to get the work before the absence.

Our co-op is designed for each student in Kindergarten through 6th grade to take gym, music/choir, and 1 elective each semester. Children are expected to participate to the best of their ability in the classes. Students may not excuse themselves from classes “because they don’t like the activity”. If you have a child between preschool and 6<sup>th</sup> grade who does not wish to participate in a class, he/she must stay with a parent during that class period. Furthermore, they may not take an elective in lieu of music or gym. If this is a problem for your student, please contact the Co-Directors.

Students are not permitted to roam the building during class time.

### **Being Present on Campus**

At least one parent is required to be present in the building or on the grounds while co-op is in session. Having a parent present in the building or on the grounds ensures that someone can be quickly and easily accessible in the event of an emergency or accident. It also builds the community of the co-op, strengthens relationships between families, and helps provide guidance to homeschooling newcomers.

We do understand that occasionally you may need to be away from the building. In the event that you need to leave, please write your name and cell number on the white board provided in the parents’ room, along with the name of the member who will be responsible for your children in your absence. This should not be a regular occurrence.

### **Safety/Security**

Students and Parents are required to wear name tags at all times while they are on campus. This is a safety request by Grace Baptist Church so they can easily identify “strangers” when classes are in session. Name tags are provided at the beginning of each school year to all Lower Tier students in Preschool-8th grade and participating parents. During the year, it’s a great idea to keep name tags in your family folder from week to week, to make sure you have them for co-op.

We will collect all name tags at the end of the school year. Children in Nursery will be given sticker name tags each week.

Cornerstone Leadership is committed to maintaining a safe environment for all students. Evacuation procedures and maps are posted in all classrooms and specific instructions are reviewed with all members prior to planned evacuation events.

### **Illnesses**

We ask that you adhere to the following guidelines in order to keep our families healthy.

- Vomiting or diarrhea- stay home until symptom free for 24 hours.
- Fevers- stay home with any fever higher than 100 degrees.
- Anything contagious (like pink eye, strep throat)- stay home until after 24 hours on antibiotics.
- Colds- are typically manageable for older children who know to cover their mouth and nose when sneezing and wash hands frequently and thoroughly. Nursery and preschool age children should stay home (or with you) at co-op.

### **Membership Responsibilities**

#### **Teaching, Monitoring and Cleaning**

All participating parents are required to teach *at least one semester* each year. Since we fill teaching slots one-year prior, new members usually will not be needed to teach until the following year.

The number of monitor spots each member will need to fill each semester is dependent on the number of participating families and the number of classes each semester.

The monitor and cleaning sign ups will be posted on the website and links sent out in the newsletter. These spots are available on a first come, first serve basis. If not signed up by the given deadline, leadership will place you in a needed position. If possible, teachers will not be required to monitor during the semester that they are teaching.

Any member with a child under six months of age will be exempt from teaching, monitoring, and cleaning.

Each semester, all members will sign up for a cleaning spot, either the first four weeks of classes or the last four weeks. Cleaning will occur after third period classes dismiss at 3:25 PM. Please refrain from beginning your cleaning earlier than 3:25 PM unless specific arrangements have been made with the coordinator.

Cleaning cards with specific instructions are located in the Parents' Room. Please make sure that you follow the instructions. If there are any questions, the Directors will be able to help.

Any member who is unable to fulfill these member responsibilities, must talk to leadership to find other ways to serve the co-op.

#### **Substitution Policy**

All members are expected to attempt to find their own substitutes for teaching, monitoring and cleaning responsibilities. Please use the member directory, located on our website, to find substitutes or send a group email out to all members. Please communicate any changes with the Monitor and Cleaning Coordinator and/or the Teaching Coordinator. If there is a last-minute illness or family emergency, call or email the Monitor and Cleaning Coordinator and the Directors.

## **Nursery**

Cornerstone Lower Tier provides a nursery for children under age three. The Nursery is available ONLY when you are fulfilling teaching, monitoring and cleaning obligations. If you have a nursery age child, either take them with you during your free time or remain in the nursery to socialize.

Please check your child in on the provided sign in sheet and label their belongings before leaving. Any pertinent information should be included on the sheet (ie. allergies, snacks, naptime, etc.) The sign in also asks for your location in case you need to be located in the building. We strongly recommend that all Nursery and Preschool age children have a change of clothes packed in case of emergency.

## **Communication**

*Email is required for all members.* This is the primary means of communication for the co-op.

During the school year, members receive an emailed newsletter most Mondays. This includes important announcements, upcoming events and items of interest for the entire group. Members are not able to opt-out of receiving this newsletter.

A member directory is available on our website to members only.

Each family has a file folder that can be found in the parents' room in a file box (alphabetical by last name). Occasionally, paperwork, cards, notes or homework will be put in the folders. Please use the folders and check them on a regular basis.

Cornerstone Lower Tier Directors' email is [lower.tier@cornerstonehomeschoolers.com](mailto:lower.tier@cornerstonehomeschoolers.com). This is also the contact to be used if you have any information that you need to have included in the newsletter.

Cornerstone Lower Tier website is: [www.cornerstonelowertier.com](http://www.cornerstonelowertier.com). The site contains general information about our co-op, the calendar and the links to the monitor and cleaning schedules.

Cornerstone Upper Tier website is: [www.homeschool-life.com/pa/cornerstone](http://www.homeschool-life.com/pa/cornerstone).

Member information may not be used for any solicitation purposes and is considered private for Cornerstone use only.

Please do not call the church directly for Cornerstone issues. We ask that members contact a director if you have a facility related question.



## Class Policies and Procedures

### **Students**

The number one priority of Cornerstone is the safety of our students and the second is providing a good quality education. To that end we have several rules/guidelines that we ask that all students abide by and families support.

If you have a child that will need extra attention in the classroom, you may be asked to monitor for those classes. If you have a child with severe disabilities, we may request that you devote your complete attention to your child and we will schedule an additional monitor for the classroom. Please communicate this to the Directors.

Please review the following list of expectations with your students:

1. Children should strive to have a teachable attitude at all times.
2. Students should show respect for the authority of all adults in the building through obedient behavior and respectful communication.
3. Nothing that is dangerous to a person or persons is permitted.
4. Nothing that damages property is permitted.
5. Students must wear name tags at all times. They are allowed to take them off during gym/fitness, but must put them back on before going to their next class.
6. No child in 4<sup>th</sup> grade or older is allowed to use the playground equipment.
7. Food and beverages other than water are only permitted in the lunchroom or in a classroom under the direct supervision of the teacher.
8. Chewing gum is not permitted on campus.
9. Students may not leave campus and wander the neighborhood at any time.
10. Disrupting the orderly classroom environment is not permitted.
11. Students must be under supervision in designated classrooms at all times.
12. Students will move between classes in a quiet and orderly fashion.
13. Respect parents, teachers, church staff, and other students. Be kind to others.
14. Refrain from taking the Lord's name in vain, including use of "Oh My God".
15. Be prepared for class, preschool - 8th grade; This includes having required supplies, books, materials, homework, and attire.
16. All students are expected to participate in the classes they are signed up for. Please communicate any physical/gym restrictions that your child may have with the Directors or the teachers.
17. Cell phones will be **off** when students are in class.
18. Students are required to complete all homework assigned by the teacher.
19. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If a teacher requires students to provide proper documentation, they must do so. Students may not at any time copy or use other people's material without giving them full credit. If a student is caught plagiarizing, the teacher will contact the Directors. If you or your student is unfamiliar with the ins and outs of plagiarism this tutorial is a real help: search "You Quote It, You Note It" online. Our logic is that if you didn't live or invent it then it is someone else's work and proper credit is due.

Cornerstone reserves the right to dismiss any student from class or require that a parent stay in the classroom with their child.

## **Dress Code**

- All members must wear modest clothing.
- All undergarments and skin in the trunk region will be completely covered by the student's clothing.
- Jewelry should be practical, not distracting, and safe to wear during fitness/gym.
- Clothing may not advertise offensively with statements or pictures.
- All students in fitness/gym classes must wear sneakers and appropriate activewear. Class may be outside, so dress according to the weather.
- Leadership reserves the right to require a student to call a parent for replacement clothing.

## **Conflict Resolution Between Members**

There are times when conflict occurs between members. Please remember Philippians 2:1-2, “Is there any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? Then...agree wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose.”

If an issue needs to be addressed, follow the guidelines that Jesus set forth in Matthew 18:

1. Pray!
2. Go directly to the person with whom you have a conflict.
3. If the problem cannot be resolved, seek counsel from the leadership team.
4. “Seek peace and pursue it.” I Peter 3:11b

*Be humble-* Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. What emotion, desire, right or attitude could you “die” to or put down in yourself? Phil 2:3-5.

*Be merciful-* “For judgement will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement.” James 2:13. “Let love cover a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:8. Perhaps this incident can be resolved without confrontation, but by extending grace, being merciful and forgiving.

*Be a peacemaker-* Does the situation require confrontation? “Go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.” Matthew 18:15-16. If you are unsuccessful, take a co-op director with you and confront that person again.

Members will seek to resolve any issues in a Christ honoring way, without gossip or division within the Cornerstone community.

## **Termination of Membership**

The leadership of Cornerstone Lower Tier reserves the right to terminate membership without reimbursement of any fees if the conditions of membership are not upheld.

## **Final Note**

All co-op related matters not specifically addressed in this handbook will be brought before the leadership team to be discussed. After prayer and consideration, the leadership team will come to a resolution that is for the good of the co-op as well as the individuals involved.