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# 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:** 7-8th-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.

## 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)

We believe that life begins at conception, and that human beings, at every stage of life, are valued and loved by their Creator God.' (Psalm 139:13-14)

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.

## 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). The members' parents provide all teaching and monitoring.

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.

## Membership Information

### Leadership

Cornerstone Upper and Lower Tier functions under the direction of the Cornerstone Cooperative board. 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 all the 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 the 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 4-year minimum term.

Teacher/Class Administrator-

- Manage class schedules, class descriptions, and teacher sign-ups. This is a 3-year minimum term.

Monitor and Cleaning Administrator-

- Manage the schedules for all monitors and cleaning slots. They are the contact for callouts and substitutions. This is a 3-year minimum term.

Events Coordinator-

- Manage communications between members planning field trips, presentations, and social events. They make certain we have all the needed information to communicate with the members, and if supplies or money are needed from Cornerstone, and make the sign-up genius as needed for the events. This is a 3-year minimum term.

Choir Coordinator- currently distributed among the music teachers.

- Manage all music teachers and accompanists. Develop a theme and program for the Spring concert and plan for a nursing home concert if there is one. Oversee all coordination between music classes while communicating with the Directors. Purchase the music the classes (K-6) need, stay within budget, and keep a log of expenses. This is a 2-year minimum term.

Safety Coordinator

- Manages all issues/concerns related to the safety and security of the co-op members. They will request and track all security clearances. This is a 3-year minimum term.

New Member Liaison

- Serves as a contact for the newest members of the co-op. They will assist with orientation tours as well as help the new members on the first day of co-op. This is a 3-year minimum term.

## General Information

### 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 for members only.

Each family has a file folder that can be found in the lobby in a file box (alphabetically by last name). Paperwork, cards, notes, or homework will occasionally be put in the folders. Please use the folders and check them regularly.

The 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's 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 they have a facility-related question.

### Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather, Lower Tier will NOT follow any School District's decision. Instead, the Directors will send an email to all members by 9 AM if the weather becomes an issue, and a delay or closing is required. Please use your discretion if roads are not acceptable to drive on in your area. We do have a snow makeup day built into our yearly calendar following the last regularly scheduled class date.

### 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 are considered a member of 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 \$140 fee per family each year: \$110 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. \$30 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.

Members will be responsible for any fees Cornerstone Lower Tier incurs due to checks being returned for insufficient funds.

## Class Sign Up

Class sign-ups will not happen at the time of registration. Every student in kindergarten through sixth grade will be automatically signed up for their age-appropriate music and gym class. If there is a significant reason 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 at 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.

*7-8th-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.

*All classes*, Students will be expected to take classes within their declared grade level.

## 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 before participation in Lower Tier. Clearances must be renewed every five years from the date of issue.

## Co-Op Class Days

### 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 12:15 PM and ending around 3:30 PM. Each week consists of three 55-minute class periods preceded by announcements and ending with clean-up time.

Class dates are determined by the board in the spring of each year for the following school year. Classes are held for eight weeks on the first, third, fourth, and fifth Thursdays of each month. Classes are not held on Thanksgiving.

## Attendance

At least one parent is required to attend a “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 that they will be out, they should notify their teacher to get the work done before the absence.

Our co-op is designed for each student in kindergarten through sixth grade to take gym, music/choir, and one 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 sixth 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 place 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. If you need to leave, please write your name and cell number on the whiteboard provided on the leadership table at the entrance, 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

Cornerstone Leadership is committed to maintaining a safe environment for all students. Evacuation procedures and maps are posted in all classrooms.

Students and Parents are required to always wear name tags 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-eighth grade and participating parents. During the year, it is 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 the Nursery will be given sticker name tags each week. There will be a number placed on each preschool and nursery child’s name tag, as well as the corresponding parents. All monitors and teachers will confirm that the numbers correspond when picking up the child.

All doors will be locked throughout the co-op day. Enter through the west entrance doorway (parallel to Farmingdale Rd.) between 12:00-12:30. Proceed to the Gym for announcements. From 12:30-3:30, use the Fellowship Hall doors when entering or exiting. There will be a check-in/check-out table next to the doorway.

### Illnesses

We ask that you adhere to the following guidelines 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 their 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 need 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.

In the fall, all members will sign up for a cleaning spot, either the first four weeks of classes or the last four weeks. Members will keep the same cleaning assignment for the spring semester. Cleaning will occur after the 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 on the parent table. 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 the 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 Administrator and/or the Teacher/Class Administrator. If there is a last-

minute illness or family emergency, call or email the Monitor and Cleaning Administrator 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, they must remain with you during your free periods.

*Strollers are permitted in the Fellowship Hall area only.*

Please check your child in on the provided sign-in sheet; they will receive a name tag sticker when they are dropped off. Please make sure the number that is on your parent's name tag is written on the sticker name tag for your child. Any pertinent information should be included on the sheet (i.e., allergies, snacks, nap time, etc.) The sign-in also asks for your location in case you need to be located in the building. We also recommend that you label their belongings before leaving. We strongly recommend that all Nursery and preschool-age children have a change of clothes packed in case of emergency.

## Class Policies and Procedures

### Students

We aim to provide quality education; in order to do so, Cornerstone must be a safe environment for all attending, and we must work together to care well for our facility. We have given this list of rules to be followed by all students and enforced by parents.

If you have a child who needs extra attention in the classroom, you may be asked to monitor 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. Students must always wear name tags.
2. Students are to exhibit respect toward all through behavior and communication; this includes but is not limited to cursing or using expletives.
3. Students are expected to participate in the classes they are signed up for and complete all assigned homework. Please communicate with the teacher or director if your child has a restriction that will inhibit their involvement.
4. Students should strive to always have a teachable attitude.
5. Disrupting the orderly classroom environment is not permitted.
6. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If a teacher requires students to provide proper documentation, they must do so. Students may not copy or use other people's material without giving them full credit at any time. 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 did not live or invent it, then it is someone else's work and proper credit is due.

7. Food and beverages are only permitted in the lunchroom unless the teacher has gotten approval from the directors. Chewing gum is not permitted.
8. Playground equipment is only to be used by students in Pre-K through 3rd grade.
9. Students may not leave campus and wander around the neighborhood at any time.
10. Nothing dangerous or damaging to people or property is permitted.
11. Students will be respectful of the church building. No running in the building or defacing of church property will be permitted. All furniture, equipment, decorations, etc., is to be treated with care.

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, non-offensive clothing. No undergarments are to be seen.
- All students in fitness/gym classes must wear sneakers and appropriate active wear. Classes may be outside, so dress according to the weather.
- Jewelry should be practical, not distracting, and safe to wear during fitness/gym.
- 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 outlined 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 judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.” 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.