



# Classes Handbook

Prelude Music and Choristers I & II

2024-2025

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# MCCL Program

## **Mission Statement**

Training children and youth to glorify Jesus Christ through excellent choral singing

## **Vision Statement**

We honor and celebrate music as a gift from God by creating exceptional choral music, fostering community, and nurturing character.

We equip children and youth for a lifetime of worship and service to the church and community through Christ-centered repertoire that both affirms Anabaptist beliefs and reflects the musical diversity of the church around the world and through time.

## **Affiliation**

The Mennonite Children's Choir of Lancaster is a program of Lancaster Mennonite School. This affiliation began in October 2001.

## **History**

Founded in 1998, the Mennonite Children's Choir of Lancaster began as a choir of 31 singers under the direction of artistic director Patricia Strong Myers. Since then, the program has grown to include auditioned and non-auditioned choral opportunities for more than 150 children and youth in kindergarten through grade 12. The singers represent a variety of churches, schools, and communities across Lancaster, Lebanon, Berks, and Chester counties. They gather on Tuesday evenings from August through May to participate in rigorous classes and rehearsals to prepare for sharing times and a Christmas and spring concert series.

In addition to the bi-annual concert series, the choirs collaborate with other arts organizations, participate in benefit concerts, perform in concert series, and share music with schools and other community organizations. Annual summer tours have provided opportunities for national (over 15 states) and international (Canada, Germany, Albania, Bulgaria, Indonesia, Czech Republic) service and learning. The choir has also had the privilege of singing at events such as Mennonite World Conference in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, local church conference events, Eastern Mennonite Mission's events, Mennonite Disaster Service events, Mennonite Central Committee benefit concerts and local school chapel services. In addition, the choir has enjoyed connecting with the local community by singing at locations such as retirement communities, Lancaster Central Market, Park City Center, Lancaster Barnstormers, and Music for Everyone in Lancaster City.

## **MCCL Singer Profile**

The MCCL community welcomes members who are committed to and desire to grow in the skills and values listed below. In addition, MCCL commits to providing opportunities for singers to cultivate and deepen these skills and values.

- **Motivation and self-reliance:** Singers who are keen to participate fully and build their singing skills, both in rehearsal and at home, will thrive.
- **Tuneful and artful:** Singers who desire to grow in producing a healthy sound with resonance and breath support and to develop choral artfulness, will flourish.
- **Curiosity for reading and languages:** Singers who are curious about learning will blossom. Music is a language that singers learn to read and interpret through consistent practice. In addition, singing music from around the world in many languages builds cultural understanding and stokes curiosity.
- **Teamwork:** Singers who are willing to build relational skills by working and engaging with other singers and following the direction of instructors, will shine.
- **Long-term commitment:** Singers who stay involved multiple consecutive years will experience maximum growth and fulfillment. Social, emotional, and musical benefits of participation in choir grow exponentially through multiple years of involvement.

## **MCCL Classes**

### **Prelude Music (kindergarten through grade 1)**

A non-auditioned class, Prelude Music engages children with music. Singing, listening, playing, and moving are important components. Greater emphasis is given to experiencing than to performing.

### **Choristers I (grades 2 – 5) and Choristers II (grades 5 – 8)**

A non-auditioned class, Choristers provides an opportunity to learn vocal and choral skills in a relaxed, fun atmosphere. Participants learn healthy singing technique, intonation, beat keeping, ear training, rhythm reading, music reading, and rehearsal skills in a highly active and engaging environment.

## **MCCL Choirs**

### **Carol Choir (grades 2 – 5)**

Carol Choir is an auditioned performing choir. Singers:

- sing in unison and in simple two-part harmony
- practice singing basics: proper breathing, posture, tone, diction, healthy vocal production,
- develop choral disciplines such as following instructions, watching the director, and choir etiquette
- participate in small group musicianship classes (during rehearsal) to develop music reading skills
- develop the skill of guided at-home practice to build vocal strength and health
- learn age-appropriate music including rounds, simple melodies, hymns, and songs from around the world and across time
- sing in concerts of excellence for the glory of God
- develop understanding of worship to God and service to the church

### **Concert Choir (grades 6 – 8)**

Concert Choir is an auditioned performing choir. Singers:

- strengthen skills learned in Carol Choir
- develop a clear choral sound with consistency throughout the vocal range
- continue small group musicianship classes, at-home practice, and choral disciplines: sight singing, phrasing, score study, dynamics, and performance practice
- sing in two-, three-, and four-part harmony
- learn music of different choral styles, historical periods, languages, and cultures
- participate in a multi-day national tour

### **Chamber Choir (grades 9 - 12)**

Chamber Choir is an auditioned performing choir. Singers:

- build on fundamentals learned in Carol and Concert Choirs
- sing SATB as well as three- and four-part men's and women's ensemble pieces
- continue to develop and deepen music literacy in small group musicianship classes, through at-home practice, and during rehearsals: vocal independence, score analysis, dissonant intervals, and masterclass opportunities
- participate in a multi-day national or international tour
- Post high singers who are committed to intentional continued vocal growth may be invited to continue to sing with Chamber Choir for two years post high school.

### **Men's Ensemble (grades 9 - 12)**

Men's Ensemble is for singers who are members of the Chamber Choir. The ensemble nurtures and promotes singing for the changing and changed male voice and performs a diverse repertoire ranging from unison to four-part harmony.

### **Women's Ensemble (grades 9 – 12) (potential)**

Women's Ensemble is for singers who are members of the Chamber Choir. The ensemble nurtures and promotes singing for the developing woman's voice and performs a diverse repertoire ranging from unison to four-part harmony.

### **Select 8 – 16 Voice Ensemble (grades 8 – 12) (potential, dependent upon interest and skill)**

Select Ensemble is for singers who are members of an MCCL choir with strong independent musical learning skills who are motivated by the challenge of singing a small ensemble repertoire at a high-performance level. Auditions are required to be a part of this select ensemble.

## Artistic Staff Bios (Classes)



### **Monica Hochstedler Carlson, Director, Prelude Music**

Monica holds a Master of Music in Piano Pedagogy and Performance from Westminster Choir College and a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education from Goshen College. She teaches third through sixth grade general elementary music at Lancaster Mennonite School. In addition, Monica taught general music in public and private schools in VA, built a thriving private piano studio in VA and served as a private and group piano instructor at Goshen College (IN), Southern Methodist University (TX), Shenandoah Valley Preparatory Music (VA), and Woodberry Forest School (VA).



### **Sarah Smith, Director, Choristers and Assistant, Carol & Concert choirs**

Sarah holds a bachelor's degree in Music Education (voice concentration) from Grove City College. During college, she was a member of the Grove City College Touring Choir for all four years and served as the student conductor for the group as well as received the Music Education award her senior year. Sarah teaches lower elementary music and is the sixth grade classroom assistant at Veritas Academy.



### **Laura Metzler, Assistant, Choristers**

Laura holds a degree in Elementary Education (Spanish concentration) from Houghton College and a master's in education (ESL track) from Eastern Mennonite University. She taught fourth grade at Lititz Area Mennonite for five years followed by one year of teaching ESL with Youth With a Mission in St. Marc, Haiti. She taught private piano, guitar, and violin lessons over the last 20 years and leads worship in her home congregation. Laura works part-time as a manager at the Mennonite Life Visitors Center (and Biblical Tabernacle Experience).

## Leadership Staff and Advisory Board Contacts

### Artistic

#### **Rosemary Blessing**

Artistic Director  
Director, Chamber Choir  
[chamberchoir@lancastermennonite.org](mailto:chamberchoir@lancastermennonite.org)

### Administrative

#### **Maria Bowman**

Managing Director  
Choir Manager  
[mcclchoirmanager@lancastermennonite.org](mailto:mcclchoirmanager@lancastermennonite.org)

## Advisory Board

#### **Lyn Carlson**

Advisory Board Chair  
[mcclboard@lancastermennonite.org](mailto:mcclboard@lancastermennonite.org)

#### **Larry Guengerich**

Advisory Board Vice Chair  
[mcclboardvc@lancastermennonite.org](mailto:mcclboardvc@lancastermennonite.org)

#### **Lorri Bentsch**

**Doug Garrett** (treasurer)  
**Dr. Jeffrey Gemmell** (emeritus)  
**Kate Greiser**  
**Seth Hake**  
**Durelle Leaman**  
**Lamar Myers**  
**Kathy Keener Shantz**

## Class Details and Logistics

### Locations and Times

Blossom Hill Mennonite Church graciously allows MCCL to rent its facilities. Singers and families are expected to treat facilities with care and are not permitted to be in areas of the church that are not in use by MCCL.

Classes are held on Tuesdays at the following locations and times:

Prelude Music class	Blossom Hill Mennonite Church	5:00 – 5:45 p.m. class #1 6:00 – 6:45 p.m. class #2
Choristers I class	Blossom Hill Mennonite Church	6:00 – 6:45 p.m.
Choristers II class	Blossom Hill Mennonite Church	6:55 – 7:40 p.m.

### Singer/Family Expectations

- Arrive 5-10 minutes before rehearsal begins.
  - This is time to use the restroom.
  - Parents/guardians will sign in their singer(s).
- Parents are invited to wait in lobby or hallway during class.
  - There is access to nursery for younger siblings. Please clean up following use.
  - Siblings must be under the supervision of parent/guardian at all times.
- Parents/guardians must sign their children out.

### Illness

- Please do not come to MCCL event if you have any of the following symptoms:
  - Fever over 100.4 or stomach illness in previous 24 hours
  - Significant cold symptoms that prevented singer from attending school: cough, runny nose, or sore throat (not allergies)
  - For minor illnesses like a cold or sore throat that do not prevent a singer from attending school, MCCL asks that singers attend rehearsal as an observer.
- If you need to miss an MCCL event due to illness, please email director immediately.

## Class Calendar

### 2024 Fall Semester

Dates of classes and details for specific dates are listed below.

Day	Date	Time	Details
Tues.	Oct. 1	5:00 – 5:45 p.m.	Prelude Music 5:00 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in classroom at 5:10 p.m.)
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m.	Prelude Music 6:00 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in sanctuary at 6:10 p.m.)
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m.	Choristers I 6:00 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in sanctuary at 6:00 p.m.)
		6:55 – 7:40 p.m.	Choristers II 6:55 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in classroom #34 at 7:15 p.m.)
Tues.	Oct. 8		
Tues.	Oct. 15		
Tues.	Oct. 22		
Tues.	Oct. 29		
Tues.	Nov. 5		Receive Jars for Fall Fundraiser at class More details will be shared at the parent meeting.
Tues.	Nov. 12		
Tues.	Nov. 19	6:00 – 6:45 p.m. Class	Prelude Music both classes meet at same time <b>(5 p.m. class: note time change to prepare for sharing time)</b> Fall Jar Fundraiser money due.
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m. Class	Choristers I & Choristers II both classes meet at the same time (6:55 p.m. class: note time change prepare for sharing time) Fall Jar Fundraiser money due.
		6:45 - 7:15 p.m. Sharing Time	Prelude Music, Choristers I & II Family members are encouraged to attend.

### 2025 Spring Semester

Dates of classes and details for specific dates are listed below.

Day	Date	Time	Details
Tues.	Feb. 18	5:00 – 5:45 p.m.	Prelude Music 5:00 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in classroom at 5:10 p.m.)
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m.	Prelude Music 6:00 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in sanctuary at 6:10 p.m.)
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m.	Choristers I 6:00 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in sanctuary at 6:00 p.m.)
		6:55 – 7:40 p.m.	Choristers II 6:55 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in classroom #34 at 7:15 p.m.)
Tues.	Feb. 25		
Tues.	Mar. 4		
Tues.	Mar. 11		



2025 Spring Semester (cont.)

Day	Date	Time	Details
Tues.	Mar. 18		
Tues.	Mar. 25	NO CLASSES	NO CLASSES
Tues.	April 1		
Tues.	April 8		
Tues.	April 15	6:00 – 6:45 p.m. Class	Prelude Music both classes meet at same time <b>(5 p.m. class: note time change to prepare for sharing time)</b>
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m. Class	Choristers I & Choristers II both classes meet at the same time <b>(6:55 p.m. class: note time change prepare for sharing time)</b>
		6:45 - 7:15 p.m. Sharing Time	Prelude Music, Choristers I & II Family members are encouraged to attend.
Tues.	April 22	6:15 to 7:20 p.m. Grade 1 to Grade 5  7:00 – 8:15 p.m. Grade 6 to grade 8	Join the Song – Open Rehearsal at Neffsville Mennonite Church Singers in rising grades 2 through 8 are invited to participate in a performing choir rehearsal and to rehearse for Saturday, April 27 concert. (optional)
Sun.	April 27	<b>3:00 p.m.</b> report time <b>4:00 p.m.</b> concert	<b>Concert – Location TBD</b> Prelude Music and Choristers I & II will join auditioned choirs. More details will be shared at parent meeting and throughout semester.

## General Information

### Communication

The MCCL directors and staff communicate by email. Parents and singers are encouraged to email their directors rather than contacting them at classes.

If a singer is going to be absent, please email the director ahead of time.

### Dress Guidelines

MCCL's goal is maintain a professional appearance at each class and concert.

- Shorts must extend below fingertip length when arms are at the side.
- Dresses or skirts must come to at least two inches above the top of the knee.
- Pictures, messages, and symbols on clothing and jewelry must be in line with the mission and values of the choir.
- Shirts must have sleeves and cover the midriff.
- Undergarments may not be visible.
- Leggings are permitted with a top that is mid-thigh in length.

### Restorative Practices

MCCL is committed to restorative practices. Restorative practice includes creating a caring environment, talking openly about positive and negative experiences, creating a plan to name and change behaviors that negatively impact a singer, director, and/or the whole choir and making things right with all involved. Making things right may include apologies, mediation, and actions. Parents may be asked to participate in this process.

### Student Safety

#### Student Safety Policy

As a faith-based community choir, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of choir members is vital. The Mennonite Children's Choir of Lancaster (MCCL) has a policy in place to ensure the safety of students participating in the MCCL program. It can be viewed in the Member Portal section of the MCCL website. Ask MCCL staff for a hard copy if desired.

#### Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, teasing, name calling, embarrassing someone in public, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. Students or parents should inform staff immediately when any form of bullying is observed.

### Inclement Weather Policy

- All weather-related cancellations will be announced by email.
- Cancellations of concerts will be announced on WDAC and WJTL and posted on the MCCL Facebook page and website.

## Financial Responsibilities

### Tuition

The Mennonite Children’s Choir of Lancaster is a tuition-based choir. Tuition funds about one-third of our budget. Offerings, fundraisers, and donations make up the balance of our income. Operating expenses include sheet music, uniforms, concerts, salaries, facility rental, insurance, and publicity.

Tuition for the Prelude Music, Choristers I, and Choristers II program is:

\$190 full year

\$95 per semester \*

\* In addition, families participate in a fall semester fundraiser.

### Tuition Assistance

MCCL invites singers to participate in choir regardless of financial status and will work with each family to ensure the financial obligations to MCCL are met. Tuition assistance is available to those who sing the entire year. It is also available to families new to the MCCL program in January. The tuition assistance application, along with non-refundable deposit, is due with choir registration. Applications received by the early deadline will be given priority.

### Fundraisers

Fundraisers help offset the difference between tuition and the actual cost of the MCCL program. Singers and families of Prelude Music and Choristers I & II are expected to participate in the Fall Jar Fundraiser or pay an opt-out fee, if preferred. Details about the fundraiser will be shared at the fall parent meeting.

Each family will receive 6 food mixes to sell. Mixes are \$10 each.

Opt-out fee is \$60.

If a family bypasses fundraiser participation through a required opt-out fee, the payment is not a tax-deductible donation.

### Refer a New MCCL Family and Tuition Discounts

For the 2024-2025 choir season, current MCCL families will receive a tuition discount for each new choir family who joins a choir or class because of their personal invitation. The newly invited family will also receive a discount.

	New MCCL family with singer in <b>Prelude Music</b> or <b>Choristers I or II</b>	New MCCL family with singer in <b>Carol Choir</b>	New MCCL family with singer in <b>Concert Choir</b> or <b>Chamber Choir</b>
Discount for each current and new family	\$10/semester \$25/full year	\$50/full year	\$60/full year

The discount is per family, not per singer.

- If a new MCCL family registers singers in multiple classes or choirs, the highest discount available will be applied.
- If two current MCCL families invited the same new family, the discount is shared between the current families.
- As part of registration, current MCCL families will list new families they invited to join MCCL this spring.

### **Business Sponsorship and Tuition Discounts**

Each year, business sponsors are invited to partner with MCCL. These partnerships with local business owners strengthen and sustain the MCCL program and provide a portion of the MCCL budget. Benefits for businesses vary depending on the level of sponsorship and include options for advertising in the concert program, on concert posters, and at concerts.

There are five levels of sponsorship:

Concert Series Underwriter	\$5,000 per concert season
Presto	\$3,000
Allegro	\$1,500
Allegretto	\$1,000
Andante	\$ 500

Family and friends of singers often are significant supporters of MCCL. We encourage new and current families to invite local businesses to join MCCL as sponsors. If you plan to invite a business, please send names of potential business sponsors to the Managing Director at [mccl@lancastermennonite.org](mailto:mccl@lancastermennonite.org). If a business you recommend has not already been contacted, we will prepare a sponsorship packet for you to share with them.

A tuition discount (20% of sponsorship) will be applied to your family for each business sponsor you recommend and contact if they partner with MCCL by the start of the fall semester. Total tuition discount may not exceed total tuition owed by each family. If a Business Sponsorship is received before September 30, the tuition discount will be applied to the fall semester. If a Business Sponsorship is received after September 30 and before February 1, the tuition discount will be applied to the spring semester. If a Business Sponsorship is received after February 1, the tuition discount will be applied to the following choir year

\$1,000 per family for a Concert Series Underwriter
\$600 per family for a Presto business partner
\$300 per family for an Allegro business partner
\$200 per family for an Allegretto business partner
\$100 per family for an Andante business partner

### **Refund Policy**

Tuition paid, less a \$30 administrative fee, may be refunded through the second class of the semester. Tuition will not be refunded after the second class of the semester.

### **Returned Check Fee**

A \$50 fee will be charged for returned checks.

## Instructions for Registration

1. Print this page.
2. Go to <http://www.mennonitechildrenschoir.org>
3. Click green **Member Portal** button at the **top** of any page (on desktop) or in dropdown menu (on mobile device)
4. Enter Username and Password.  
**Username:** mcclmember  
**Password:** MCCL!singing2425!
5. Click **Singer Registration**.
6. When logged in, complete **Steps 1 & 5** (Steps 2 through 4 are for the auditioned choirs)

Email [mcclchoirmanager@lancastermennonite.org](mailto:mcclchoirmanager@lancastermennonite.org) if you experience any difficulties or have questions during the registration process.