



Classes Handbook

Prelude Music and Choristers

2026-2027

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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 (LM). This affiliation began in October 2001. MCCL has an independent Advisory Board. In addition, program structure and decisions, staff benefits, choir fundraisers, and development work operate independently from LM.

History

Founded in 1998, the Mennonite Children's Choir of Lancaster began as a choir of 31 singers under 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 in Lancaster and surrounding counties. They gather on Tuesday evenings from August through early May to participate in engaging 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 provide 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 Mennonite World Conference and in areas associated with Eastern Mennonite Missions, Mennonite Disaster Service, and Mennonite Central Committee in addition to events held by local church conferences. 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.
- **Tunefulness and artfulness:** Singers who desire to develop choral artfulness and to grow in producing a healthy vocal tone with resonance and breath support, 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 encourages 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 participating 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 (grades 2 – 6)

A non-auditioned class, Choristers provides an opportunity to learn vocal and choral skills in a relaxed, fun atmosphere. Participants learn healthy singing techniques, 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 to develop music reading skills
- develop the skill of guided at-home practice assignments 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 with joyful, expressive, and worshipful excellence
- develop understanding of singing as worship to God and as service to the church and community

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 assignments, 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 stateside 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 assignments, and during rehearsals: vocal independence, score analysis, dissonant intervals, and masterclass opportunities
- participate in a multi-day stateside 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. Typically, in the spring semesters, eighth grade male singers are invited to participate in one or two songs with Men's Ensemble.

Women's Ensemble (grades 9 – 12)

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

Select Ensemble (grades 8 – 12)

Select Ensemble (potential dependent on interest and skill) 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 required.

Musicianship Classes

Musicianship classes provide music reading and theory instruction to all members of MCCL auditioned choirs. These classes are built into weekly choir rehearsals and are organized in small groups based on age and previous music experience.

Grant: Singing Across Generations (Cultivating Understanding and Connections)

MCCL has been awarded a three-year grant from the Lancaster Legacy Foundation to support a new intergenerational partnership with Landis Homes, running from fall 2025 through spring 2028. This initiative is designed to foster meaningful connections between MCCL singers and Landis Homes residents, particularly individuals living with dementia or other cognitive changes, through shared musical experiences.

Through guided singing interactions, MCCL auditioned choir singers in grades 2–12 engage with residents to promote well-being, empathy, and a sense of belonging. The initiative is led by MCCL and Landis Homes staff. Singers participate in workshops and practice assignments designed to help children and youth understand how singing supports mental health and brain development across the lifespan, with particular benefits for individuals living with dementia.

Throughout each choir year, MCCL singers join Landis Homes residents in seasonal activities such as caroling, hymn singing, and small-group performances. These experiences allow singers to understand choral music not only as an art form but also as a meaningful act of service and healing. High school singers have the opportunity to participate in a music therapy intensive, which includes observing and engaging in therapeutic music sessions and reflecting on their own mental health in youth-only spaces. They also rehearse alongside residents in *Sing for the Moment*, a choir hosted by Landis Homes specifically for people living with dementia and their care partners. Participation in this ensemble reinforces identity, connection, and joy for all involved.

This intergenerational singing project affirms the restorative power of music while equipping young singers with a deeper understanding of mental health, both their own and that of others. By building relationships through shared musical experiences, MCCL and Landis Homes aim to cultivate joy, belonging, and community across generations.

Voice Lessons & Vocal Coaching

Individual voice lessons develop individual vocal technique, expand vocal range, refine tone, and develop confidence and skills. Vocal coaching and voice lessons help singers achieve vocal goals and grow personally.

MCCL private lesson rates:

- 30 minutes = \$29.00
- 45 minutes = \$43.50
- 60 minutes = \$58.00

During the school year, lessons are a combination of virtual (approximately three times per month) and in-person at Blossom Hill Mennonite Church (approximately one time per month). Summer lessons are primarily in person. Singers who commit to voice lessons should practice four to six days a week for 20 to 30 minutes. There is a separate Voice Lesson Handbook and a Covenant of Participation that singers sign when they take part in voice lessons.

Voice lessons with an MCCL voice instructor are a special opportunity for members of the MCCL choral community. If a singer is no longer a member of an MCCL choir or class, they may not continue private lessons with an MCCL voice instructor for a year following participation in the MCCL program. Exceptions may be considered for graduating seniors.

Staff and Advisory Board Contact Information

Artistic

Rosemary Blessing

Artistic Director
Director, Chamber Choir
chamberchoir@lancastermennonite.org

Administrative

Maria Bowman

Managing Director
mcclchoirmanager@lancastermennonite.org

Advisory Board Contact

Lyn Carlson

Advisory Board Chair
mcclboard@lancastermennonite.org

Larry Guengerich

Advisory Board Vice Chair
mcclboardvc@lancastermennonite.org

Lorri Bentch (secretary)

Doug Garrett (treasurer)

Dr. Jeffrey Gemmell (emeritus)

Ron Guenther

Kate Grieser

Seth Hake

Olivia Imchen

Lamar Myers (emeritus)

Kathy Keener Shantz

Artistic Staff – Class Directors and Assistants



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).



Jonathan Shoff, Director, Choristers

Jonathan holds a Master of Music from West Chester University and earned his bachelor's degree in music education from Millersville University with a concentration in piano and a minor in voice. Jonathan has 20 years of experience teaching vocal, instrumental, and general music with all age levels ranging from Pre-K through adult. He has worked with many local music programs including Music for Everyone, S.W.A.N., and numerous community theaters. Previously he served as the MCCL Men's Ensemble Director, Chamber Choir accompanist, and Choristers Director. Currently, he is the Choral Director at Warwick High School.



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).



Janell Cunalata Zook, Assistant, Prelude Music

Janelle received her Masters of Music from Sam Houston State and a bachelor's in Music Education with an Oboe Performance Certification from Penn State University. Janelle led orchestra and band in public schools several years before moving to Ecuador in 2010 where she taught group music, gave composition lessons, and played first oboe with the Ecuador National Symphony. Since returning stateside in 2016, Janelle is music director at Hinkletown Mennonite School, has studied with composition teachers, and is a published composer of string orchestra music.

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 class	Blossom Hill Mennonite Church	6:00 – 6:45 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 Fall 2026

2026 Fall Semester

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

Day	Date	Time	Details
Tues.	Oct. 6	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 classroom at 6:10 p.m.)
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m.	Choristers 6:00 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in classroom at 6:10 p.m.)
Tues.	Oct. 13		
Tues.	Oct. 20		
Tues.	Oct. 27		
Tues.	Nov. 3		
Tues.	Nov. 10		Receive Jars for Fall Fundraiser at class More details will be shared at the parent meeting.
Tues.	Nov. 17		
Tues.	Nov. 24	6:00 – 6:45 p.m. Class	Prelude Music both classes meet at same time (5 p.m. class: note time change to prepare for sharing time) Fall Jar Fundraiser money due.
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m. Class	Choristers
		6:45 – 7:15 p.m. Sharing Time	Prelude Music & Choristers Family members are encouraged to attend.

Class Calendar Spring 2027

2027 Spring Semester Dates of classes and details for specific dates are listed below.			
Day	Date	Time	Details
Tues.	Jan. 19	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 classroom at 6:10 p.m.)
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m.	Choristers 6:00 p.m. Class begins (Parent meeting in classroom at 6:10 p.m.)
Tues.	Jan. 26		
Tues.	Feb. 2		
Tues.	Feb. 9		
Tues.	Feb. 16		
Tues.	Feb. 23		
Tues.	Mar. 2	NO CLASSES	NO CLASSES
Tues.	Mar. 9		
Tues.	Mar. 16	6:00 – 6:45 p.m. Class	Prelude Music both classes meet at same time (5 p.m. class: note time change to prepare for sharing time)
		6:00 – 6:45 p.m. Class	Choristers
		6:45 – 7:15 p.m. Sharing Time	Prelude Music & Choristers Family members are encouraged to attend.
Sun	April 18	3:00 p.m. report time 4:00 p.m. concert	Concert – location TBD Prelude Music and Choristers will join auditioned choirs. More details will be shared at parent meeting and throughout semester.
Tues.	April 20	6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Grade 1 to Grade 5	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.
		6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Grade 6 to grade 8	

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 to maintain a professional appearance at each MCCL class and event.

- 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 mid-riff.
- Shorts must extend to mid-thigh.
- Dresses or skirts must extend below finger-tip length.
- Leggings are permitted with a top that is mid-thigh in length.
- Undergarments may not be visible.

Restorative Practices

MCCL is committed to restorative practices. Restorative practice includes creating a caring and secure environment at all choir events, talking openly about positive and negative experiences, and encouraging singers to reflect on positive and negative behaviors in choir. If behaviors or attitudes are negatively impacting a singer or the whole choir, directors will work with the singer to reflect on behavior, create a plan to change behavior, and as needed, make 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 to families.
- Cancellations of concerts will be posted on WDAC, WJTL, MCCL social media pages, and the MCCL website for the pub

Financial Responsibilities

Tuition

The Mennonite Children’s Choir of Lancaster is a tuition-based choir. Tuition funds about one quarter of our annual 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 and Choristers program is:

\$190 full year

\$95 per semester *

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

Tuition Assistance

MCCL is committed to providing every young singer the opportunity to participate in MCCL choirs and classes. MCCL works creatively and collaboratively with each family to ensure tuition and fees are met and that no singer is prevented from participating due to finances.

Tuition assistance is available for singers participating for the full year, as well as for families who are new to the MCCL program in January. To apply, families must submit the tuition assistance application and a non-refundable deposit along with choir registration. Priority consideration is given to applications received by the early deadline.

Fundraisers

Fundraisers help offset the difference between tuition and the actual cost of the MCCL program. Singers and families are expected to participate in the fall Jar Fundraiser or pay an opt-out fee, if preferred. Families who choose the required opt-out fee instead of participating in the fundraiser should note that this payment is not tax-deductible

- Each family will receive 6 food mixes to sell. Mixes are \$10 each. Opt-out fee is \$60.

Refer a New MCCL Family and Tuition Discount

For the 2026-2027 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 Prelude Music or Choristers I or II	New MCCL family with singer in Carol Choir	New MCCL family with singer in Concert Choir or Chamber Choir
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. 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

Contributions

Tax-deductible gifts may be sent to:

MCCL
PO Box 5146
Lancaster, PA 17606

Or given online at www.mennonitechildrenschoir.org/donate

Please make checks payable to LM/MCCL and write MCCL on the memo line.

A tax-deductible receipt will be sent for donations of \$50 or more.

Payment Options and Details

Payments include fees for tuition, uniforms, lost uniforms, lost music, fundraisers, tour, and other expenses. Payments may be submitted via check, ACH (electronic bank withdrawal), debit card (with a 3% added fee), or credit card (with a 3% added fee).

- For check payments, a paper form is completed and mailed or brought to rehearsal.
- For ACH, debit card, or credit card payments, an invoice will be emailed with a link to pay. Payment is due within 15 days of invoice date.

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 \$60 fee will be charged for returned checks.

Instructions for Registration

1. Go to <https://mennonitechilrenschoir.org/member-portal/registration>
2. You will be required to login. Use the following:
Username: mcclmember
Password: MCCLsinging!!together!!2627
3. Click on **Singer Registration**.
4. When logged in, complete **Steps 1 and 5**. (Steps 2, 3, and 4 are for auditioned choirs only)

Email mcclchoirmanager@lancastermennonite.org if you experience any difficulties or have questions during the registration process.