

Fide splendet et scientia

It shines by faith and knowledge



stambrosecoop@gmail.com

A ministry of the Basilica of Sts. Peter & Paul

Family Handbook 2021-2022

**A Catholic Homeschooling Co-Op working
to strengthen our children's faith and knowledge**

Our Core Committee

Sandy Pricer, director

Jessica Burton, elementary school coordinator

Denise Nelligan, Safe Haven coordinator & high school coordinator

JoAnn Polickoski, secretary & special events coordinator

Jeannie Sommers, Little Lambs, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd & nursery coordinator

Joe Pricer, treasurer

The Core Committee ensures the success of St. Ambrose co-op by planning and administering, with input and guidance from the Basilica clergy, all aspects of the co-op including but not limited to: planning classes; purchasing supplies; setting up service opportunities; interfacing with the Basilica staff; and working diligently to provide a quality program rooted in our Catholic Faith.

The Core Committee welcomes ideas, suggestions, questions and concerns.

Send all official co-op correspondence to stambrosecoop@gmail.com

The Core Committee will address any concerns at its next scheduled monthly meeting (typically the first Wednesday of each month) and issue a response after its conclusion.

Since committee members are also homeschooling mothers of 30 total children with 70-plus years of homeschooling experience, who are volunteering their time and talent to ensure the success of co-op, please have patience, flexibility and understanding when addressing concerns.

Our Statement of Faith: The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,

begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried,

and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Governing Values

As a ministry of the Basilica of Sts. Peter & Paul, all who participate in the St. Ambrose Catholic Homeschool Co-Op must agree to and adhere to the following rules, regulations, policies, and procedures:

Fully Catholic

Families committed to homeschooling their children in the Catholic faith are welcome. They must be practicing Catholics. A practicing Catholic is someone who at a minimum attends Sunday Mass every week and is a registered parishioner of a local Catholic parish. A practicing Catholic makes a religious assent of the mind and intellect to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, which is summarized especially in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Faith is founded on Sacred Scripture, the Inspired Word of God, and Sacred Tradition faithfully handed on under the guidance of the Holy Spirit by Apostolic Authority.

Precepts of the Catholic Church

St. Ambrose Homeschool Co-op members must agree to adhere to the 7 Precepts of the Catholic Church, condensed as follows:

- I. To attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and resting from servile works.
- II. To observe the days of abstinence and fasting.
- III. To confess our sins to a priest, at least once a year.
- IV. To receive Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist at least once a year during Easter Season.
- V. To contribute to the support of the Church.
- VI. To obey the laws of the Church concerning Matrimony, which is between one man and one woman.
- VII. To participate in the Church's mission of Evangelization of Souls. (Missionary Spirit of the Church)

Volunteering

Every adult (18 and older) who will be on campus during co-op must be "Safe Haven" trained within 30 days of joining co-op or will not be allowed to continue participating. Online training, by CMG Connect, is a series of videos available through the Diocese of Knoxville website (www.dioknox.org), then click on the Safe Environment section. The Basilica and Core Committee each require a copy of the "Safe Haven" certificate once training has been completed. Volunteer paperwork and background check paperwork are also required by the Basilica.

Every parent or guardian who will attend co-op with their child(ren) will be assigned a volunteer position. We work hard to assign each adult a role they feel comfortable and capable of performing.

Families also are expected to volunteer to help implement our two fundraisers, selling Advent candles after Masses in the fall and a bake sale in the spring. Families who do not sign up and show up to help sell at those fundraisers will be invoiced \$100. Money from fundraisers is used to offset co-op operating costs, pay for parties, and to give back to the Basilica community depending on the needs

each year. (In the past, St. Ambrose has donated proceeds to the organ restoration fund, bought a basketball hoop, replaced toys in the nursery, etc.)

Attendance & Responsibilities

Personal Accountability

All parents/guardians are responsible for their children and their behavior while attending co-op and on the campus of the Basilica. Any discipline that needs to be addressed will be brought to the attention of the child's parent/guardian to correct the behavior. Any damage caused will be repaired by or payment made by that parent. Please remember that it is a privilege to utilize the church facilities, and co-op participants must act accordingly with respect and gratitude. There is to be no running anywhere on campus, in the buildings, or in parking lots, except during designated P.E. or recess times.

Parent and Student Responsibilities

Parents and students should come to class prepared for the day's lessons, including having completed homework or projects, bringing in items requested by the teacher, and having a backpack or tote bag for their belongings. The co-op provides all textbooks, workbooks, paper, writing utensils and school supplies.

All students 8th grade and younger enrolled in co-op must attend all morning classes available for their age or grade level. High school students may attend 1, 2, 3 or all 4 classes.

Lead teachers are provided manuals and materials for teaching their classes; those materials must be returned at the end of the school year.

Clothing must be appropriate for attending Mass. Co-op T-shirts should be worn during co-op classes. All participants first grade and older, including all adult participants, must wear a nametag while on campus during co-op hours. Please label children's bags, jackets, water bottles, etc.

Only water is allowed in the classroom building. Each student should bring a water bottle that doesn't leak with their name on it so they do not have to leave class to visit the water fountain.

Students are not to use any sort of electronics during class hours, including games, phones, tablets, or handhelds. Parents and teachers should refrain from using electronics during class time as well to focus on the students.

Drop-Off Policy

A "Safe Haven"-trained parent or guardian must attend co-op with their 8th grade and younger child(ren) and remain on campus (to include the church, Varallo Hall, nursery, religious education building, and parking lot) during morning co-op hours.

If in the event of an emergency or sudden onset of illness you must leave campus early and designate someone else to take your children (ages 1st grade and older only) home, please inform a member of the Core Committee and let her know who will be responsible for your child(ren) in your absence.

High School students may be dropped off for any class for an additional \$10 per class per semester. Drop-off hours are 8:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. A \$1 per minute per student late fee will be due immediately for students who are not picked up promptly.

Absences or Late Arrivals

Post on Slack as soon as possible **before** co-op begins if there is any reason you are unable to attend co-op or will be late. We want to make this learning experience as positive and rewarding as possible for all students participating; therefore, we need to ensure adequate teaching coverage (2 adults per class) for all classes. If you know in advance that you will not be attending co-op for any reason (such as travel or a family event), please post your absence date on Slack as soon as possible so that teachers are aware and can plan their lessons and materials accordingly.

Severe Weather

If any Catholic schools in the Chattanooga area (Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Jude, or Notre Dame High School) are closed due to severe weather conditions, St. Ambrose Co-Op also will be closed. If those schools are dismissed during co-op hours, St. Ambrose will dismiss early as well. If those schools have delayed openings due to weather, St. Ambrose will be closed. ***Co-op does not follow Hamilton County Schools weather closings.***

Sickness

To protect the health of all co-op participants, no one (parents/guardians, teachers and students) who has a contagious illness in the past **72 hours** should attend co-op. That includes **fever, shortness of breath, sudden loss of smell or taste, chest pain, vomiting, rashes, diarrhea, colored phlegm/mucus, head lice, eye drainage, and croup-like coughing**. If one person in your family has any of the above, chances are someone else will also, and therefore everyone should stay home. Contagious incidents that appear during co-op hours must be reported to a member of the Core Committee (in confidence), who will then post it to Slack so other families may watch for symptoms in their own children.

COVID-19 Protocols

Anyone who has attended co-op and then exhibits symptoms of COVID-19, has been exposed to someone else with COVID-19, and/or tests positive for COVID-19 must report that to the Core Committee immediately. The co-op will follow all protocols outlined by the Diocese of Knoxville regarding social distancing, mask wearing, cleaning and sanitizing, temperature taking, reporting, and food consumption. Any procedural changes made in reaction to COVID-19 fluctuations will be announced to the co-op via Slack and Remind in a timely fashion.

First Aid

Participation in the St. Ambrose Homeschool Co-Op is at your own risk. All participants must sign the enclosed waiver for each adult and child before beginning classes.

First Aid Kits are located in the nursery; in the second floor supply closet; and near the men's restroom in Varallo Hall. Lock combination is 1890 (the year Basilica was consecrated) for all kits. Parents, guardians and teachers also must fill out a health information form for themselves and each child attending co-op.

If an emergency happens during co-op hours (such as an insect bite or a fall), the child's parents must alert one member of the Core Committee, who will then relay necessary information to the child's teachers so they can keep an eye on the child.

Communication

The primary means of communication with co-op participants is through Slack, available as an app and a website. The Core Committee will ensure each participant has access to Slack. Please provide an e-mail address on your registration form to receive a Slack invitation. Participants should check Slack regularly and especially the night before and morning of co-op as this is where homework assignments, activities, events, requests for equipment, prayers, absences, and other information is posted on a daily basis. If there is an emergent issue (such as weather), a member of the Core Committee will address it through a texting app called Remind in addition to posting it on Slack. Please provide a cell phone number on your registration form.

Social Media and Photography

Members must sign a waiver acknowledging that the Core Committee and other members of co-op may photograph or videotape any part or person of co-op, and those images may appear on social media or in print for the purposes of promoting co-op, or on another member's social media.

Application Process

Registration

Early registration is March 1-April 30 for a \$50 discount. Regular registration continues until June 15. New families must plan a virtual visit with members of the Core Committee before June 15. All families must complete an application. When the application has been approved and the family is committed to joining St. Ambrose Co-op, they must complete a registration form for each child (babies through high schoolers), read and sign a copy of the handbook, sign all waivers (both parents), and pay the registration fee. Then they will be invoiced for all class fees.

All teachers who do not have children enrolled in the program also must agree to abide by all policies in this handbook, sign waivers, and have a completed registration form on file.

Late Registration Policy

As the St. Ambrose co-op is run by a core group of five homeschooling mothers who are volunteering their time and talent to run the co-op, they need ample time in the summer to set class sizes, create the schedule, find teachers, choose curriculum, and purchase supplies in order to be ready to start on the first day of classes in August, and therefore cannot accept late registrations. For those families moving to the area after June 15 (including during the school year) and those new to homeschooling after the initial deadline, the Core Committee will decide on a case-by-case basis whether they will be able to join.

Co-Op Fees, Class Fees, Late Fees

Co-Op Fees: A non-refundable registration fee, which covers fees due to the Basilica as well as cleaning and office supplies and T-shirts, is due upon registration. Registration fee is for the entire school year and no part will be refunded in the event of withdrawing from co-op for any reason nor if co-op shuts down meeting in person due to COVID-19.

Class Fees: St. Ambrose Co-Op purchases all textbooks, workbooks, and supplies on behalf of each student depending on which courses they are enrolled in. Fees are to be paid in full by July 15 for fall semester or at registration time if after July 15. Some classes will have second semester supply fees as well (whereas all one-time book fees are charged on the first semester invoice only). An itemized invoice is provided to each family at least a month before fees are due. Class fees are not refundable after July 15.

Late Fees: If all fees are not paid by the set deadline, a \$50 late fee will be added to your account. Families who need to arrange a payment plan must contact Treasurer Joe Pricer at jmpricer@gmail.com or 423-280-9556 **before** the fee deadlines. To get a payment plan approved or to request a scholarship, please inquire if needed. Payment plans and scholarships are available on a case-by-case basis.

Class Placement

Little Lambs (ages 3-5, Pre-K-Kindergarten) must be 3 by Sept. 1 and potty-trained. Kindergarteners must be 5 by Sept. 1. Children in elementary-age classes must be age 6 by Sept. 1 and be able to read and write. Latin class placement will depend on previous Latin experience and/or a teacher recommendation. To move to a different level of classes, the parent of that student must inform the Core Committee as well as receive permission from the teacher. No changing classes after the third week of co-op. Parents are then responsible for securing the correct book for the new class (ISBN number will be provided to them), and no refund will be given for the original book(s) purchased.

Special Needs

St. Ambrose Co-op welcomes all of God's children to share in our faith journey. We strive to make co-op a positive experience for all children and expect them to participate to the best of their abilities. Special needs considerations must be noted on the child's registration form to ensure adequate accommodation for them. Please note that our building is a former convent that is more than 100 years old, and only the first floor is handicapped accessible.

Class sizes

In the event that we must limit class sizes due to classroom capacity, social distancing, and number of "Safe Haven"-trained adults available to teach, registrations will be processed in the order they are fully completed (all forms signed, "Safe Haven" training completed, payments made).

When classes have reached capacity, the Core Committee will start a waiting list for families interested in joining. In the event a family withdraws, the committee will contact those on the waiting list to complete their registration. No fees are due until registration.

Guidelines for Teachers and Class Assistants

- * When committing to teach, please keep in mind that this is a school-year-long commitment. Barring major life events, the teacher should plan to finish the school year once begun.
- * Please direct all questions, comments, and problems to the director, Sandy Pricer.
- * Teachers will be provided a folder with a class roster and must take attendance in each class. In the event of a fire or tornado drill, the students will stay with the class they are in and must stay with their

teacher. Teachers must take the folder with them to the designated meeting place and check that all students are accounted for.

* Prepare an extra lesson plan that involves minimal supplies and submit it to the director by the first day of class so that, in the case of a last-minute absence, your class can easily be covered by your assistant or a member of the Core Committee.

* Practice a positive approach to discipline, and always involve a child's parent or guardian in any disciplinary situations.

* Per "Safe Haven" rules, a minimum of two adults must be in each classroom when working with children.

* Dismiss class promptly, not early or late. Schedule:

8:00-8:15 a.m. Teachers arrive to set up classrooms

8:30 a.m. Co-op gathers in Varallo Hall for morning prayers, pledge and announcements

8:45-9:30 a.m. First period

9:30-10:15 a.m. Second period

10:15-11:00 a.m. Third period

11:00-11:45 a.m. Fourth period

11:45-12:00 p.m. Dismissal/prepare for Mass

* Open flames and combustible projects are not allowed in the buildings. If a lesson involves these, teachers must take the class outside for that portion of the instruction, EXCEPT for candles used during Catechesis of the Good Shepherd classes.

* At least two adults must accompany children (except high school students) across the parking lot between the religious education building and Varallo Hall. Students should use the buddy system when moving about campus.

* Teachers must return any co-op provided materials at the end of the school year.

* Teachers should post homework on their class's Slack channel by Sunday night following co-op. Teachers are encouraged to share what was discussed in class for parents' information.

* Grades may only be given for middle and high school students.

* In keeping with our Catholic faith, topics of a graphic or sensitive nature (such as violence, drugs, sex, etc.) should not be discussed in class. If you have a topic that could be questionable, please see a Core Committee member for approval.

* All books and materials must be approved by Core Committee and/or the priests. Core members will purchase all supplies; please do not buy anything for your class that you need reimbursement for.

Basilica Nursery Policy (effective 09/06/2018)

A nursery is available during co-op hours for parents with children younger than age 3. Parents must stay with their babies/toddlers in the nursery while their older children attend classes to ensure state-prescribed capacity (explained below) is not exceeded. All nursery-age children must be registered with co-op. Nursery slots will be allotted in the order that registrations are received.

Each child should be signed in and out by a parent or guardian, even if the parent is remaining in the nursery (because of the state requirement to limit the number of children based on their ages). Please provide a cell number if you are dropping off your child.

Nursery Staff and Volunteers

• To ensure a safe environment, THERE MUST BE TWO ADULTS IN THE NURSERY AT ALL TIMES.

A volunteer sign-up sheet is in the nursery.

- All nursery staff and volunteers must sign in and out.
- All nursery staff and volunteers over 18 must have “Safe Haven” certification registered with the parish.
- Teenagers younger than 18 may volunteer to serve in the nursery, and they are not required to have “Safe Haven” certification. But there still must be two “Safe Haven”-certified adults present.

Nursery Capacity

By State of Tennessee policy, with 2 or more staff present, the nursery may accept the following number of children, depending on the age of the youngest child:

- If there is a baby under 7 months: 8 total children
- If there is a child under 2 years: 12 total children
- If there is a child under 3 years: 14 total children
- If there is a child under 5 years: 20 total children
- If there are only ages 5 and older: 25 total children

All Other Matters

St. Ambrose Catholic Homeschool Co-Op will abide by the policies and procedures issued by the Diocese of Knoxville Office of Youth and Adult Ministry.