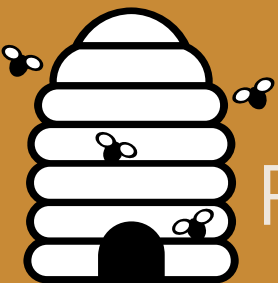




# St. Ambrose

## CATHOLIC HOMESCHOOL CO-OP



*"Fide splendet et Scientia"*

## FAMILY HANDBOOK

2025-2026



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

### **Core Committee**

**Jeannie Sommers**, Director & Little Lambs Coordinator

**Denise Nelligan**, Safe Haven Coordinator & Treasurer

**Kalista Bartee**, Secretary & Special Events Coordinator

**Nikki Pacitti**, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd & Nursery  
Coordinator

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. Please send all official co-op correspondence to [stambrosecoop@gmail.com](mailto:stambrosecoop@gmail.com). The Core Committee will address any concerns at its next scheduled monthly meeting and issue a response after its conclusion.

Committee members are also homeschooling mothers 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](http://www.dioknox.org)), 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 fundraiser, selling Advent candles after Masses in the fall. 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.

Co-op T-shirts should be worn during co-op classes. 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.

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.

### **Absences or Late Arrivals**

Please notify us 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 notify us 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 or illness, 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. St. Ambrose does not follow Hamilton County schools, but may take their closing into consideration when making decisions to cancel.

### **Sickness**

To protect the health of all co-op participants, no one (parents/guardians, teachers and students) who has had symptoms of a contagious illness in the past 24 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 send out a notice so other families may watch for symptoms in their own children.

### **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.

### **Communication**

The primary means of communication with co-op participants is through Flocknote. Parents will receive emails and text messages through Flocknote and are able to easily reply, vote, RSVP, download documents etc. Please be sure to provide your email and cell phone number when registering and you will be added to our Flocknote group.

### **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. If you would like to opt out of the Media Release, you may do so by leaving the form blank.

PLEASE NOTE: St. Ambrose Co-op has opportunities to participate in certain parish activities and special events that are open to the public. In the case of events where people outside of Co-op are in attendance, St. Ambrose Catholic Homeschool Co-op has no control over and takes no responsibility for any photography, videotaping, or audiotaping that may occur at such events.

### **Registration**

Registration opens March 1 and continues until the last day of co-op, the first week of May. New families must plan a visit with members of the Core Committee before co-op ends. 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 co-op ends (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.

**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 the Treasurer 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 and/or 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.
- \* 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.
- \* 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 email any homework 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.

### **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.