

Music Academy 2009-10 Questions and Answers

How does the Music Academy fit into the goals and structure of the church?

The Music Academy exists to train youth to become servant-minded musicians by helping them develop their God-given gifts for His glory. It provides instruction that is informed by the gospel, with an emphasis put on faithfulness, diligence, teamwork, and joy.

Making music is an integral part of our life together weekly. God's word references singing over 500 times, and frequently instructs God's people to worship Him in song. Singing our faith is a fundamental way of remembering and celebrating the gospel.

Music training is not required to be able to sing in the congregation on Sunday; however, by learning the basics of music early on, children and youth are equipped to more fully enjoy and participate in music throughout their lifetime.

In addition to its scriptural roots, training in music and the arts is also a part of a well-rounded education, and we desire to provide this for the children of this church.

The Music Academy is a part of the music ministry of the church, and partners with CLS, FSP, and families to provide musical training. This structure allows Music Academy to participate both in ministry and in education.

Will all students at Covenant Life School participate in music programs?

Yes. We want all students to have exposure to music. All students in grades 1-10 will participate in either choir or choir and band. Participation in choir will be optional for students in grades 11 and 12, during which other electives will also be offered.

What will the fees be?

The cost of CLS registration fees for participation in the Music Academy are being paid through school tuition. Students enrolled in FSP, public school, or another private school or home school program will continue to pay fees just as they have been paying for the ensemble that they choose to join.

How often will Choir and Band meet?

Beginning next year, our middle school and high school choirs will meet twice weekly instead of once. The number of instructional hours in a week will remain the same; however, students will grow in their musicianship and ability to learn music by working on music twice weekly for an hour at a time, instead of working for 2 hours once a week. Choirs will take place on Tuesday and Thursday from 1:55 – 3pm. The younger choirs (1st – 2nd grade; 3rd – 5th grade) will only meet on Thursdays during the same time.

Beginning Band students (5th grade and up) will meet on Thursday from 1:55 – 3pm. Advanced Band will meet twice weekly: Tuesday from 1:55 – 3, and Thursday from 3:15 – 4. Advanced Band students who wish to participate in choir may join the choir on Thursday afternoons.

All band students will also participate in a sectional class once a week, as outlined on the schedule.

What will the annual schedule be for band and choir?

Band will run year-round, according to the CLS schedule. Non-CLS students may enroll on a semester basis, though we encourage year-round participation.

For choir, non-CLS students may also enroll on a semester basis. The length of our semesters will grow in comparison with previous years as we will now be following the CLS school schedule. However, we plan to offer a “mini-mester” of choir in December and January. FSP families may choose to opt-out of these weeks of choir; or, they may choose to continue to participate at no extra cost. This “mini-mester” is a concentrated time to focus on key musical concepts and worshipping in song together without learning new music for performance.

How will this affect the dynamics of the groups?

We recognize that the choirs will feel different this coming year. They will be much larger, which will generate much more enthusiasm, and will also make it easier for many students to sing out vocally because they are in a larger group. But because the groups will include students at a larger variety of ability levels and interest, we will need to adjust somewhat to the needs of a group of this size. We expect to slightly change repertoire this first semester, and then over time continue to increase the difficulty level as students receive more training.

Because of this change, we will also be offering an audition-only choir for students in grades 7 – 12. This select, smaller choir is for motivated students who desire to perform more challenging repertoire. Students will learn more information about this group during the first week of choir rehearsals.

It's obvious that this change will benefit CLS students. How does it benefit FSP families that have already been participating but whose schedules will now change?

The Music Academy was started two and a half years ago in an effort to train the next generation to serve God musically. Its funding has come through program fees and as well as the church budget. The goal has been to make the program self-sustaining by 2009.

Participation and growth have been very encouraging over the last several years, but they have not increased to the level that will allow the program to sustain itself. The Music Academy has considered reducing the amount or quality level of programs offered, as well as raising fees. Costs include instructors, administration, sheet music, physical equipment, and more.

The Music Academy's partnership with CLS, however, has presented a wonderful third option. The school's financial commitment allows the Music Academy to continue to offer the same level of excellence, and actually increase what is offered. It also ensures the stability of the program for the future. For Covenant Life School, this partnership provides a full music program at less cost than starting a separate program.

We are excited about this change not only for musical reasons, but also because it presents an opportunity for home school and day school families to work together toward a common goal. Covenant Life Church is united around the gospel, not schooling choices. There are, however, very practical differences in how these schooling options function. Different schedules often allow only limited contact between home school and day school students and their families throughout the week. There will be much more natural overlap under this new plan. It is our hope that these changes will bring one more practical, small step toward the pastors' goal of members knowing, loving, and serving one another.

Many families may also want to carpool together, since the end of choir will coincide with the end of the school day.

Can my child participate in choir and also in band or strings?

Students in 4th and 5th grade will need to choose whether they wish to be in band or in choir. We encourage students to participate in band because of the long-term benefits like increased note-reading ability. Students in 6th grade and up can participate in both ensembles.

Does this affect any other Music Academy programs?

No. Other programs will continue to run, including private lessons, concerts, student recitals, the songwriting competition, and the solo and ensemble competition. We plan to offer other opportunities, such as the summer musical and a “battle of the bands” for students playing rock band instruments.

Will the string ensembles also run during the day?

The string program will continue to run after school, similar to how it has functioned in the past.

We are also happy to announce that Joel and Susan Fuller will be joining Rachael Boer as instructors in our string program. Mr. and Mrs. Fuller joined Covenant Life last fall. Joel plays violin with the National Symphony, and Susan is the Suzuki String Program Chair at the Levine School of Music.

I already signed up for outside classes, such as Chieftain, and they conflict. Can you help me?

We talked with many families to compare schedules and find a time that would be least disruptive to existing schedules. There is no “ideal” time because of many competing factors, but we hope that our new schedule will serve as many families as possible.

My student attends public school, or another private school. Can he or she participate in some way?

We regret that some students will not be able to participate because of this new scheduling. We also recognize, however, that most students also have opportunities for music training through their school. We will be intentional about providing opportunities for these students to participate from time to time, through special church events such as the Christmas production, Summer Musical, and other opportunities.

How can I help with this plan for next year?

First, pray. Ask God that he would make the transition smooth, and that he would help us to train our students well. Pray that students would respond cheerfully and work diligently as they are taught.

Second, consider volunteering. We will have many needs for parent volunteers throughout the year, including those who can be supervisors for events. We'd love to have you join us. To learn more, please contact Nancy Chouinard at nchouinard@covlife.org.