

Grace Home Educators Cottage Classes

Participation Agreement

Our Statement of Faith

As a ministry arm of Grace Fellowship, the Grace Home Educators Cottage Classes willingly operate under the authority of the church. To be clear regarding the views held and taught in these classes, we adopt the Statement of Faith of Grace Fellowship:

- A. We *Believe* that the Bible is the verbally and totally inspired Word of God, inerrant in its original manuscripts. The Bible is our supreme and final authority in faith and life. (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20, 21)
- B. We *Believe* in one God, eternally existing in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Genesis 1:1, 26; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1,3; 4:24; Acts 5:3,4; Romans 1:20; Ephesians 4:5,6; II Corinthians 13:14)
- C. We *Believe* that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, and is both true God and true man. (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13)
- D. We *Believe* that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death which is separation from God, and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature, and become guilty sinners in thought, word, and deed. (Genesis 1:26, 27; 3:1-24; Romans 3:25; 5:12-18; I John 1:8)
- E. We *Believe* that the Lord Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, that He rose from the grave on the third day, and that all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood. (Isaiah 53; Matthew 20:18; John 3:16; Romans 3:24-26; 5:1; I Corinthians 15:3, II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7; I John 2:2; Matthew 28:6; Romans 10:9 and I Corinthians 15:14)
- F. We *Believe* in the personal and visible return of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:16, 17)
- G. We *Believe* that all who come by grace through faith to accept the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God. (John 3:3, 5; 1:12, 13; James 1:18; I Peter 1:23; Ephesians 2:8, 9)
- H. We *Believe* in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting joy of the saved and the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost. (John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:4-6; 11-15)
- I. We *Believe* that God created marriage to be exclusively the union of one man and one woman, and that intimate sexual activity is to occur exclusively within that union. (Matthew 19:4-6)

Our Vision and Mission

We the parents of the Grace Home Educators Cottage Classes, a ministry of Grace Fellowship, in light of our privilege to homeschool in a Christian setting among fellow Christ-followers, endeavor to reflect Christ's love in all we say and do and agree to work together with one another to instill into all of the children under our care:

- A. The development of godly character demonstrated through attitude, word and deed (i.e. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, integrity, diligence, responsibility, gratefulness, generosity);
- B. An appreciation, thirst and persistent drive for personal excellence as evidenced through spiritual, academic, and physical efforts;
- C. Biblically-based world views (i.e. God as Creator, the fallen nature of Man, salvation by grace through faith alone, Man's purpose to glorify God, the sanctity of life and marriage);
- D. Biblically-based social behavior (i.e. compassion, servant's heart, courtesy, respect for authority, honesty, modest dress, natural gender expression; abstaining from coarse language, abusive or illegal use of drugs or alcohol or sex outside of marriage);
- E. The cultivation of godly relationships by reaching out to those beyond our natural friendships and building each other up through kindness, support, and encouragement, both in the classroom setting and in times of fellowship.

Cottage Class Principles, Policies & Procedures

A. Cottage Class Board of Directors

The Grace Home Educators Cottage Classes are governed by a board of directors who report to a principal who is subject to the leadership of Grace Fellowship. The principal is selected from among the board of directors by the board of directors. The existing board selects new board members. Any candidate for the board must have a history of two years of successful participation in Grace Cottage Classes and a clear alignment with the values defined in this document. The board is responsible for admitting families, setting the schedule, timelines and fees, assigning tasks and resolving disputes. They have complete discretion in how they choose to fulfill their responsibilities. Members of the Board of Directors for the 2025-26 school year are:

Dawn Sjolund
Heather Griess
Wendy Hughes
Amanda Lembke
Katie Mattson

B. Qualification for Joining Cottage Classes

Cottage Classes are not open to the public. The board will screen families wishing to join Cottage Classes and has complete discretion in extending invitations to participate. Preference will be given to prospective families who have been members of Grace Home Educators at large in a previous year. Each year, families must affirm agreement with this document; the parent and students Grades 5-12 must sign. In addition, each family will be reviewed by the board at the end of the school year to determine whether or not that family will still qualify for the next school year.

C. Compliance with the Law

It is the responsibility of each member family to ensure that they are operating in compliance with all Minnesota homeschooling laws. The Grace Home Educators group does not in any way regulate, enforce, or ensure that its members are operating a legal home school, but instead assumes each family is in compliance.

D. Parent/Teacher Responsibilities

In order for a family to participate in Cottage Classes, a parent must diligently fulfill their job requirements, Parents are expected teach or co-teach 2 classes each year.

Teachers and co-teachers of a class may choose different roles, but they should agree to divide the workload evenly amongst themselves. All teachers and co-teachers should plan to have preparatory work to do while planning the class and each week during the school year. They should also plan to be engaged in classroom activities each week.

Parents are expected to attend two mandatory meetings each year in May and July/August. Absences must be approved by a board member before the meetings and the parent is still responsible for the information presented. Send a representative to the meeting if you must be absent and/or connect with a board member to get the information.

Final plans for classes, including required class fees and necessary curriculum/supplies, as needed, should be available no later than the July/August mandatory meeting. Teachers need to be committed to making their class a success by being prepared and present each week and communicating assignments clearly. When a teacher needs to be absent, they must follow proper procedures for notifying the appropriate board member liaison and provide plans and materials to their co-teacher/sub.

Teachers are free to set their own criteria for grading, but these grades are not binding. Parents are free to assign grades for classes based on criteria normally used for their child for the child's permanent records.

If a parent is no longer able to perform their job assignments, they must work with the board to plan for the transition of the responsibility to someone else and to find a suitable replacement job. Parents must continue to fulfill their job requirements in order for their students to continue participating in Cottage Classes.

Parents are expected to remain on site while their children are in classes or follow proper procedures for leaving the building. If a parent has no teaching responsibilities during an hour, they also may be asked to fill in for an absent teacher.

Parents are expected to assist and encourage their students in attending class regularly and completing their assignments in a timely manner. Communicate with the teacher when your child misses class. Speak privately to the teacher if you or your child has any issues with a class. If a parent believes a teacher is operating outside the principles in the Participation Agreement, they should notify the board to resolve the issue.

In addition to Cottage Class jobs, parents are also expected to contribute their time to a specific group job assignment that benefits the group as a whole such as planning a social event.

E. Registering for Cottage Classes

Registration for qualified returning families takes place in May/June. Parents must commit to their required number of jobs before registering. Registration fees, Family fees and Student fees are collected at registration. Once your registration has been submitted, no refunds will be given. The board has the discretion to choose to open cottage class registrations to an additional select group of families in April.

F. Course Selection

The planning process for the following school year begins in March with a survey of interest followed by an evening planning session. A rough draft of the schedule will be completed before registration opens, with revisions as necessary. Individual class signups begin in June. Schedule changes may happen in July due to signup results.

G. Add/Drop Policy

Changes may be made to individual class selection at any time during the class signup window. Once signups close in July, no changes may be made until after the late summer Mandatory meeting when signups will reopen for several days for adjustments. After this time, class fees are not refundable. For the benefit of teacher's preparations, no further changes may be made until after the first day of class. After the first day of class and prior to the 3rd day of class, students may add or drop a class with the approval of the teachers and the board for a fee of \$20/student/period. Any class additions must be made prior to the 3rd day of class. Students may drop a class after this time with teacher and board notification. A parent or guardian must supervise students when they are not in class.

H. Proper Conduct

Cottage Classes are to be a safe and edifying environment for everyone because all participants willingly adopt this code of proper conduct.

i. Be respectful of other people

- a. Serve cheerfully, fulfilling all responsibilities and going beyond expectations.
- b. Don't gossip or criticize, resolving conflict in a biblical manner (See Sections K. & L.)
- c. Speak with civility and with a non-threatening demeanor at all times, avoiding teasing, foul language and verbal abuse.
- d. Treat others as you would want to be treated, avoiding unwanted physical contact, horseplay, and violence.
- e. To help ease awkwardness and hurt feelings, anything that suggests a romantic relationship, including personal displays of affection, are not allowed at co-op.

ii. Be respectful of property

- a. Treat the church building and other's property as though it belongs to the Lord.
- b. Clean up after yourself, leaving the classrooms, lunchroom, bathrooms, library and halls cleaner than you found them.
- c. Use furniture as it was intended.
- d. Limit running and throwing objects to the gym.
- e. Parents, supervise your children to assure respect of people and property.
- f. Acts of vandalism will lead to restitution and possible suspension.

iii. Be respectful of Cottage Classes

- a. Students must show respect for teachers and other adults in word and deed.
- b. Come on time.
- c. Be prepared for class. Diligently complete assignments in a timely manner.
- d. Actively participate in class, doing all the teacher requests.

- e. Avoid disrupting class with talking, noise or distracting behavior.
- f. Cell phones, computers or other electronics should be put away during class.
- g. Students need permission from the teacher to leave class.
- h. Have integrity when completing tests or assignments. Cheating will be reported to the parent and the board.
- i. Students must be in their assigned classroom, in a supervised study hall or with their parent or supervising adult during all class sessions.
- j. During lunchtime, students should stay in the gym or with a supervising adult.

I. Disciplinary Action

1st Infraction: The teacher will speak to the student privately and parent will be notified.

2nd Infraction: Student will be dismissed from class immediately and brought to their parent. The teacher should notify a board member as soon as possible.

3rd Infraction: Student will be dismissed from class immediately and brought to their parent. The board will be notified and will discuss the issue with the teacher, student and parent. The student may be expelled from class or from all Cottage Classes for the remainder of the school year at the discretion of the board. No refunds will be given.

Serious infractions should always be reported promptly to the board, which may suspend the student immediately, at their discretion. The board may require restitution for property damage.

J. Resolving Conflict

Often the most godly response to conflict is to overlook the offense. We naturally tend to look out for our own interests and those of our children, so deal with each other in humility and love. Make sure you have not had a critical, negative or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. Avoid reacting impulsively. Pray for humility and wisdom.

Do not complain to others about the problem or vent on social media. If you pray and feel it is not wise to overlook the offense, arrange to meet individually with the person you have offended or who has offended you. Seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If you are not able to resolve the conflict after meeting privately with the other person, then please ask two board members to hear your concerns and help you reconcile. This is the method God has prescribed for us in His Word. The board intends to hold parents and children accountable for following these guidelines when a conflict arises.

If you hear discussion about another's conflict, please encourage that person to stop and speak to the offending party directly. Coach your children to refrain from critical talk with their friends or on social media. Gossip and slander tear down and have no place within a body of believers. Complaining about a class is disrespectful to the teacher and can affect the attitude of all the students. Seek to be loving and kind in all your conversations.

By signing the Participation Agreement, you have agreed to abide by the authority of the teacher, participate fully in class, complete the assigned work, and abide by the teacher's vision. Talk with your child's teacher if there is a problem completing assignments and try to come to an agreement. Encourage your child do his best and complete all work to the best of his ability. Schedule adequate time to complete required homework.

If you cannot come to an agreement with a teacher, contact two board members. It may be necessary to withdraw your child from a class rather than continue to allow non-participation to undermine the authority of the teacher and the morale of the class.

Let us work together to handle conflict in a way that will bring glory to God and build up the body of Christ.

K. Peacemaker's Pledge: A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ. Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on his grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

Glorify God — Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love, as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude.

Get the Log out of Your Eye — Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.

Gently Restore — Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them. When a conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.

Go and be reconciled — Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an assignment, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know His infinite love.

Adapted from The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict. © 1997, 2003 by Ken Sande. All Rights Reserved.

***Let each of you look not only to his own interests,
but also to the interests of others.
Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,
Philippians 2:4-5***

Agreement to Participate

I _____, the undersigned parent, in affiliation with Grace Home Educators, agree with and commit to promote and uphold the beliefs, values, principles, policies, and procedures stated herein. I understand that if my position on this changes, I have an obligation to bring my disagreement to the board of directors, and accept their resolution.

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Parents should review Cottage Class Principles, Policies and Procedures Section H. (Proper Conduct), Section I. (Disciplinary Action) and Section J. (Resolving Conflict) with all their children before classes begin. Additionally, students in Grades 5-12 must acknowledge their agreement with these guidelines by signing below.

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____