

Community Life in H.O.P.E. for Hidalgo County, Inc.

A community by definition is a group of people living together who share a common way of life which is expressed in shared beliefs, goals, values, purpose, responsibilities, and communication. Inherent in this common way of life is a set of principles and derived customs which characterize the distinctiveness of such a community. These time-established customs become the traditions with which members of the community identify. A distinguishing mark of a Christian community is that its members commit to a set of basic principles which are considered essential to maintain the spirit and health of the community. One basic tenet of the H.O.P.E. community is found in Jesus' two great commandments in Matthew 22: 37:40:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind . . . And . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Thus, members of the H.O.P.E. community seek to love God and practice self-sacrificial love in relationship to others.

Rights and Responsibilities with the H.O.P.E. Community

Membership in the H.O.P.E. community entitles one to certain rights but also obligates one to accept responsibilities which accompany such privileges. Generally, the rights and responsibilities of members are published in the H.O.P.E. Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules. The Executive Committee encourages all members to familiarize themselves with the basic information provided in these documents as they provide the guidelines for the relationship which exists between the member families and the H.O.P.E. support group.

Foundational Principles of Community Life

The concept of community in the H.O.P.E. support group is built on foundational principles which we believe are essential for success, not only for the home schooling years, but to build up servant-leadership for the rest of our children's lives. We are aware that these underlying principles may seem so obvious that we may at times forget to identify their vital impact on everyday living. We recognize that these are not the only principles upon which a community can be founded.

If you struggle with one or more of these principles but are committed to what they represent, we enthusiastically invite you to join our community. If however, you cannot appreciate or commit to these principles, H.O.P.E. for Hidalgo County may not be the right place for you.

Foundational Principles:

A. H.O.P.E. is committed to following Biblical mandates for living. The Bible is our ultimate authority. It provides the essential teachings and principles for personal and community living. By following biblical mandates regarding lifestyle decisions, an individual may discover a life of holiness in relation to God and others.

B. H.O.P.E. is committed to a life-style characterized by integrity. Integrity is both knowing the right thing to do and doing it regardless of the circumstances. In contrast to a world characterized by selfish compromise, the H.O.P.E. community is characterized by honesty, faithfulness, loyalty and mutual respect. These kinds of ethical choices build character and moral excellence.

C. H.O.P.E. is a respectful and inclusive community. The transforming work of God in the lives of individuals is reflected not only in respect for proper authority, but also for oneself and others and the property of others. Respect for others facilitates an inclusive community which promotes an appreciation for the diversity of God's kingdom. H.O.P.E. seeks to foster respect, acceptance, and support for differences of gender, race, national origin, age, mental and physical ability, expressions of the historic Christian faith, and ethnic culture.

D. H.O.P.E. is a redemptive community. In addition to promoting a right relationship with God, the community promotes right relationships with one another and with the group itself. Redemption requires us to move beyond love as a theory and to put it into practice through forgiveness, reconciliation, restitution, and restoration.

E. H.O.P.E. is a disciplined community. Healthy and holy living requires self-control which is evidence in learning to limit our own freedom for the good of ourselves and the community. Our community encourages its members not only to discipline themselves but to be accountable to God and others for their actions. The practice of disciplined living is a lifetime skill which is not always convenient but is always healthy when practiced with a sense of balance.

Lifestyle Standards of the H.O.P.E. for Hidalgo County Community

The standards espoused in this document reflect biblical imperatives, traditions, and commitments which we believe will prepare our children to develop a "lifestyle for a lifetime." The following categories are meant to be guides by which responsible members govern their lives as they make a meaningful contribution to the life of H.O.P.E. These categories are not meant to be exhaustive and often overlap.

A. Morality

Issues of morality are those which can be delineated as right, virtuous and just. In a Christian home school support group, moral issues are based on biblical mandates.

The Scripture teaches that a believer can demonstrate certain Christ-like attributes through the power of the Holy Spirit. These attributes include "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23 declares there is no law against such demonstrations of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives and we should encourage one another to practice these attributes in our relationships.

In contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:19-21 condemns those acts and attitudes which reflect our sinful nature. These acts and attitudes include sexual immorality, idolatry, occult practices, hatred, discord, jealousy, uncontrolled anger, greed, quarreling, envy, and drunkenness. In a community of believers, these acts and attitudes will hinder relationships with God and others if they are tolerated and will lead to unacceptable behavior.

Certain behaviors are expressly prohibited in the Scripture and therefore are unacceptable in the H.O.P.E. community. These behaviors include: theft (including plagiarism), lying, dishonesty, gossip, slander, profanity, vulgarity (including crude language), sexual immorality (including adultery, homosexual behavior, premarital sexual intimacy), drunkenness, immodesty of dress and occult practices.

B. Honor

In addition to biblical expectations mentioned above, members of the H.O.P.E community voluntarily commit to abide by community standards which are intended to promote the well-being of both the individual and the support group.

This document was adapted from the Asbury College Handbook for Community Life .