

**Mary (and Joe) Abrahamson – Parents of Sophie, John (GPL '22), Stella (GPL '24), Donna (GPL '25), Inge (GPL '27)**

What led up to enrolling your children at GPL?

*We had moved to a new community and had our children enrolled in the local public schools. At that time we had six children in grades 1-10. Although I had homeschooled in the past, I felt unable to do it for our high school children at that time. So we looked into GPL.*

Was it a long process or short? Smooth or back and forth?

*I will back up a bit here to when our oldest, Jeremy, was entering high school. This is when we first considered GPL.*

*At that time my husband was pastoring four ELS congregations in far NW MN. Our ninth child was newborn. I also had a toddler and a preschooler. I was homeschooling kids in grades K, 2, 4, 6, and 8. And Jeremy, was entering high school.*

*It was at this time that we first time we looked into GPL. Joe took Jeremy to tour your school. I think our next youngest, Matt, was along, too. Having attended MLPS in the early 80s, I was very excited about the possibility of offering a similar experience to our children.*

*But Joe also took him (or them) to see the charter school in the town where Joe had grown up. The local citizens had gotten together to start a charter school based on the country school model or even like a small parochial multiple grade classroom. It had different ages and grades learning together and helping each other learn, community involvement, old fashioned values, family centric worldview, etc.*

*After examining both of these options for Jeremy, the financial end of things was the deciding factor for us. (It seems like it's always about the money, but that's one reality of the blessing of a large family.) We chose to have Jeremy live with his grandparents and attend the charter school. Although not diagnosed, Jeremy is definitely on the autism spectrum. This charter school was the perfect place for him, and he thrived and grew immensely during that time.*

*We could have considered GPL again for the high school kids. But because of the cost associated with GPL, and the fact that we were raising ten children on a single income we didn't consider it very long. It just seemed too impossible. And we had a great blessing that in those years, the principle at our public school was a very faithful Christian man, who respected and supported family and home and our Christian world-view.*

*After we moved, we decided to once again attempt to homeschool the youngest four kids. I had begun working part time to help rectify our financial situation (that by that time had become precarious). That fall we would have Inge in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, Donna in 4<sup>th</sup>, Stella in 5<sup>th</sup> And John in 7<sup>th</sup>. But also Sophie, who was going into 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and Clara was going into 11<sup>th</sup>. I think both high school girls toured GPL. Clara decided she didn't want to change schools yet again. Sophie had four years ahead of her. She was very interested in GPL. I very much wanted her to attend there, since the thought of*

*homeschooling a high school student on top of the younger four, while still working part time, was very daunting. But after looking at the price tag of GPL, we knew we could not responsibly afford it. I couldn't work full time and school the younger kids. We had a significant amount of consumer debt from the years of raising all the children on one income. And we are "older parents." We were at that time almost 50. Six kids still at home. We had little retirement savings. And the number of years we might still be able to work was growing ever smaller. We sadly discontinued our registration process at GPL.*

*I remember the phone call I got from Mr. Brown. Or was it Pr. Maertz? I can't remember for sure which it was. They were only names at that time. I didn't yet know the wonderful men behind the names. I don't remember who it was, but I remember the message.*

*Whoever it was asked, "Do you mind my asking why you've decided against GPL?"*

*"Simply put, we cannot afford it. I know one can't put a price tag on a Christian education, but one still must have a way to pay. And we don't."*

*"If that is the only reason, let me offer you this to think about. We have resources to help in situations like yours. We have among our supporters people who very greatly want children to experience a Lutheran high school education, and who have been blessed financially, and who are able to help us provide that to those who need the financial help."*

*I cannot express what I felt at that moment. It was a light in the darkness. I had been feeling such sadness and worry over how to either educate our high schoolers myself, or how to support them best through the experience of a public high school. The memory of that moment, that phone call, still brings tears of joy and thanksgiving to my eyes.*

Describe what you were thinking and feeling when you dropped your children off at the dorm for the first time?

*I was very excited when dropping off my children. I loved going to MLPS, and I was excited for my kids to have a similar high school adventure. We have been blessed to have five children who have attended GPL. Each of these kids has a unique personality. Each has his or her own struggles and gifts. For some of the kids, I had a few concerns. Whether one of them would be able to manage the responsibilities of keeping his or her room in order or personal possessions arranged. Whether he or she would be able to keep up with homework. One or two might have had some emotional struggles during those years that caused some concern. For most it was a mix of excitement and mild concern. For some, it was pure joy and excitement. But either way, I knew God had our children in His hand. And His hand is much bigger and more capable than mine.*

Talk about some of the challenges you have worked through and some of the blessings you have experienced.

*My children have had mostly good experiences at GPL. GPL is, however, part of this broken world. My children are sinful, their classmates and dormmates, faculty and staff are sinful. There will always be trials of one sort or another.*

*When the children have brought us concerns, we've coached them as best we can from a distance. At this age, they still need their parents, but they need to begin navigating relationships as adult Christians. We have had to guide them in addressing their peers and also occasionally the faculty and staff as Christian brothers or sisters. These aren't exact words, of course, but the gist of such situations might be along these lines. "Examine your own part in this. Are there aspects for which you need to ask forgiveness? When you think of the other's part, can you put the best construction on it, according to the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment? Is there sin that needs to be addressed? How can you do that according to Matthew 18?"*

*There have been times we have advised our children to seek the help of the campus pastor. Part of his job is to help these young people navigate relationships in light of their Christian faith.*

*There have been times we have had things brought to our attention by the faculty or staff. Or by the campus pastor.*

*While raising my own children, when overwhelmed with the multitude of them, or when addressing particular situations, I have always tried to keep in front and center what I think of as the "blessed couplets": Law and Gospel, Sin and Grace, Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins. And I've seen these truths acted out in the lives of our children at Great Plains.*

*In good times and times of difficulty, the many people at GPL have cared for our children under the banner of these same truths. My children have had their sins addressed; they've confessed and been offered forgiveness by their campus pastor. When they've had difficulty with a teacher or classmate, these difficulties have all been addressed in a spirit of Christian brotherhood. This is a blessing beyond measure. Not only does this deal with the immediate situation being addressed, it also sets a pattern for dealing with all of life's difficulties and brokenness. These children will take that pattern, that example, with them into adulthood. It's the most important aspect of the school's motto, "Training students to be lifelong disciples of Christ." The moral training, the Biblical knowledge, the Christian worldview are all part of it. But the foundation of what it means to be a lifelong disciple of Christ is the message of salvation summarized in the above couplets. And my children have been blessed to experience this throughout their days at GPL.*

How has having your children away from home at GPL affected your relationship with your children?

*I miss my children. I love when they are home. I had five children who did not attend GPLHS. And sadly, shamefully, I can honestly say, (and I think they'd agree), I did not always love when they were home. They did not always love when they were home. I say this somewhat tongue in cheek, but there is a truth there. We don't always appreciate what we have, when we have it. Because the children who have attended GPL are away, we appreciate more the times we are together.*

*Although some parents are able to manage it, we cannot afford the time or the money to attend all their events. This is a sacrifice. For sure. We miss many things.*

*We cannot help out at the school as much as other parents. I'm sure our kids wish we could be more present, as some of the other parents are. I know I wish that.*

*We are very thankful that we live in an era that allows easy and frequent communication.*

*Because I don't see my children daily, I get to see my children maturing each time they are home. I notice the baby step changes that I might not notice were they here all the time.*

*We avoid the daily grind of tension that can sometimes arise between parents and adolescents.*

If you had to choose just one, what one thing do you want people to know about GPL?

*Really? You want me to find just one thing? I just wrote a small book! 😊*

*"Sending your children away to school might be scary. It might seem risky or irresponsible. It might simply be something you don't want for your kids or your life. But consider this. Are you daily keeping your family in God's Word? Are you daily asking your kids about the content of their classroom learning? Are you daily asking your kids about the worldview of their school experience? Are you consistent about training them to run these things through the sieve of God's Word? Do you remember to teach them to examine the situations they encounter in the broken world through the lens of a Christian worldview? It's easy to think you'll do all that. I know. I've been there. You might be able to keep on top of it. But life gets busy. There are activities pulling the kids one way or another. Some days you may find you hardly see your child, let alone have time to have a conversation. You may find very few opportunities to check in to see what he or she has been learning and seeing and doing. Just know that you have a choice. A Lutheran high school education can provide the setting we cannot. GPL is set up to offer these things to kids all day long, whereas we may only get our publicly schooled children for a few tired minutes at the end of a busy day. We as parents hope we can manage it all. And some can. But when we find ourselves unable to do so as well as we'd hoped, just know that a Lutheran high school education is a tool you can consider to help you to train your children in the way they should go."*