Good morning!

When we first started planning today's stewardship testimonial, I hoped my son Charlie could share his perspective with you.

To prepare for today, Charlie and I spent time talking about what Grace & Holy Trinity means to him, why we give, and what he hopes for our church's future. And while I'm the one standing here today, I wanted to share some of that conversation, because it reminded me why stewardship matters.

Many of you know that I grew up in this church. My father taught me early on that giving to the church was simply something we did. It was part of our faith and our responsibility to our faith community.

I've tried to pass that tradition along to my own children.

While Charlie and his brothers have been pledging to Grace & Holy Trinity for years, I realized that although I've encouraged them to give, I haven't always taken the time to help them understand *why*.

I asked Charlie what makes Grace & Holy Trinity special to him.

He talked about worshiping God, our celebrations, and especially the ones involving food! That apple didn't fall far from that tree.

He mentioned the Palm Sunday procession with ponies in Monroe Park, Ms. Jodie and Ms. Lisa always having sweet treats for the kids in Sunday school, and the pool parties at Ms. Meredith's house.

What struck me was that his comments weren't about our buildings, programs, or budgets. They were about the people and experiences that have made this church a special place in his life.

When we talked about why people give, Charlie talked about helping others, especially those in our community who are in need.

When I asked whether the size of the gifts mattered, he said, **"A little can go a long way."** He shared about a time when he and his brothers pooled their money to buy something they couldn't afford individually. Together, they accomplished something they couldn't do alone.

Isn't that a wonderful way to think about stewardship?

Henri Nouwen once wrote:

"Asking people for money is giving them the opportunity to put their resources at the disposal of the Kingdom."

That understanding of stewardship has always resonated with me.

Giving isn't just about meeting a budget or maintaining our buildings, though those things matter. It's about putting our resources to work for something greater than ourselves.

It's about what we can accomplish together through our faith and our commitment to this community.

I also asked Charlie what he hoped Grace & Holy Trinity would look like when he was an adult.

He hoped we'd still have the same sense of fellowship, the same celebrations, and, of course, plenty of food.

But he also hoped we'd have more people, especially more children. He said kids bring energy to the church and that having more kids might encourage others to come.

And when I asked him what he hoped everyone would know about Grace & Holy Trinity, he said something that has stayed with me:

"We all have a place here. We all belong."

I think those words offer us both a hope and a challenge.

For those of us who have called Grace & Holy Trinity home for years, it's easy to take that sense of belonging for granted. But we know that not everyone experiences our church in the same way.

And I believe we're called to keep working toward a church where everyone truly feels welcomed, valued, and included.

That's part of what stewardship means to me. It's not simply preserving what we've inherited. It's investing in what God is calling us to become.

A church that continues to worship, serve our neighbors, care for one another, and make room for new people and new generations.

I give because I believe in this community, because I'm grateful for what it has meant to my family, and because I have hope for what it can become.

And my conversation with Charlie reminded me that our gifts, large or small, help make that future possible.

We give not just for the church we have today, but for the church we hope to become tomorrow.

A church where we all have a place. A church where we all belong. Thank you.