

## **Grace 2025 Stewardship Campaign Kickoff Comments, 10/13/2024**

Good morning. I am Tootie Kuhn, Grace's Trustee for Stewardship. Today begins our 2025 Stewardship Campaign, "Hope for the Future." The pledge packets were mailed yesterday and should arrive in your homes in the next few days. Serving with me on the Stewardship Committee are Ann New, Proctor Schenk, John Shea, and Wendy Tyner.

Our campaign theme is inspired by Jeremiah 29:11, which reads: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans for hope and a future."* Hope is a powerful word. For me, it evokes strong emotions and powerful images. God has promised us hope and a future. But unless we respond to His message in a substantive way, "Hope for the Future" will just remain a catchy phrase.

We at Grace are incredibly hopeful about God's plans for our prosperous future: we are actively taking steps to grow the size and engagement of our parish community; we are providing ministry programs that support and enrich our spiritual growth for all ages; and we are intentionally reaching out to those in our community and the world who are struggling or in pain.

We recognize that turning these hopes into reality depends on our individual and collective willingness to be faithful and generous stewards by offering our financial and volunteer gifts. As Christians, we accept the premise that everything we enjoy in this life is a gift given by our loving God. In gratitude for those generous gifts, we each are asked to give back a portion of our blessings in support of the work of God's kingdom.

Scripture sets out the tithe—10% of income—as the standard for what amount we should offer. This represents our "first gifts," offered in thanksgiving for everything we have been given. This year, we are inviting every Grace household to prayerfully consider offering a pledge that represents a percentage of your annual income. While a 10% tithe may not be feasible for you, we ask you to consider your blessings when deciding what percentage you can pledge to Grace both financially and voluntarily.

Together, we have a vision for Grace's future, but we also have a financial hole to fill. Our projected budgetary needs for 2025 are in excess of \$750,000. This is the amount we must raise to "Make Grace Happen" in the

coming year. This number also is nearly 20% more than our current pledging income.

I am pleased to tell you that we already have a tremendous head start: our entire Vestry and Program Ministry Council has already submitted their household pledges for 2025 totaling \$135,000, which is more than 18% of our 2025 goal. Your leadership is ALL IN for Grace. We hope we can raise the remaining \$615,000 from you, our remaining Grace households, as our combined pledges will be the basis for our budget planning for 2025. We also depend on your offering of volunteer time and talents to sustain Grace in 2025. The pledge card has a space for you to make those offerings as well.

Throughout our campaign, you will hear and read personal testimonials in support of Grace. We have asked these speakers—and we ask you as well—to answer three questions:

1. Why does Grace matter to me?
2. What is my hope for Grace's future? and
3. What am I going to do to help turn that hope into reality?

Every stewardship decision is individual and whatever you offer is a tremendous blessing. If you have questions, please reach out to me or others on our Stewardship Committee. Thank you for your faithfulness and I hope you also are incredibly hopeful about our future at Grace Church. Now, can I get an AMEN?