

Stewardship Speech
October 21, 2012

Good morning! Greetings in the name of the Lord! Before I get started I wanted to take a moment to recognize the special significance of today. This beautiful October day, where people all across our state joined forces in the Race for a Cure. Let us all pray that one day Breast Cancer will be eradicated from our lives. May the Lord guide the doctors and researchers of our world in their tenacious fight for a cure. And may He hold every woman dealing with this disease in His everlasting embrace bringing them strength, good health, and healing.

I think Dorothy said it best. Sure it was in a movie now decades old, but a classic all the same. Her words are the sentiment I will echo today. It's one simple statement that says so very much.

“There’s no place like home.” Sure we like to travel to fun places, but after a little while, aren't you ready to come home? I know when I traveled to Greece, I absolutely loved my journey there, but when my feet hit back on US soil, I said to myself, **“there’s no place like home.”** But what I'm talking about today, is **this home**. This very home we all find here at 2504 Cub Hill Road. For so many of us, it's our second address. It's because within these most blessed walls, we all find home –our home with God, where our personal relationship with Jesus Christ blooms and grows, where we find our family, where we find our friends – and I mean the friends that stick with you – the ones that are never leaving your side. It's the home where we find “koininia” – our community. For me, I got to visit this home for the first time as a young child. I was amongst so many of you on that

day, January 4, 1976. I was merely six years old. It was a day that started out as usual at Parkville High School, but then a new chapter was about to unfold as we got into our cars and began the trek down the long, windy road we all know as Cub Hill. It was the day we were going to see our new church! There were so many people gathered that my Pa Pou held me in his arms so I could see the Opening Ceremony. First point I want to make here is to give my deepest love and respect to my parents and grandparents because

they were the ones who fostered my growth here at Saint Demetrios. As young children, we must have that parental guidance, love, and support to steer us in the right direction. I am always so happy to see parents bringing their children to church from little up. For me, growing up at Saint Demetrios has been one of the greatest blessings in my life. There isn't a room I can't walk into and not have a wonderful memory of that place. Why? **There's no place like home.** Through the decades, I was witness to countless stewards caring, sharing, cooking, baking, singing, dancing, constructing, teaching, advising, and being the very caretakers of this beautiful home. Every time you enter our church, you will always be witness to a steward in action. I remember watching so many of these stewards as a child. They all had busy lives (many still do) – their kids were young, but they were here. And their role was the one that I so desired to grow into. So I started out young and let me tell you something - you never really know how you can impact a person's life, because so many of you, have touched mine. I remember Mrs. Rene Alatzas teaching our Sunday School class, where by the way, my bestest friendship was born with the blessing of Kallie Hagepanos in my life. Then, I remember going to my first ever GOYA Meeting, I was terrified because I was sneaking in early – I was only 12 and you were supposed to be 13. But I so wanted to go because the cutest boy I ever laid eyes on was starting GOYA. I just had to go and see that Stephen Christ. As I approached the meeting door, certain I was going to be turned away, a tall, husky man turned to me with the brightest, most welcoming smile and said, "**Hello! Stephanie! Come on in.**" Little did I know that someday, that man would become my father-in-law. Spencer Vavas. A few years later, under the amazing leadership of our Chief GOYA advisor, Mrs. Dottie, I was encouraged to be GOYA President. From there, came the Young Adult League years, dancing with Demetrakia, and teaching Sunday School. Then one night, my good friend Nick Eliou and I decided to go to a Festival meeting. I don't know how it happened, but when we walked out of that board room downstairs, we were somehow deemed chairpersons of the Festival, encouraged by Irene Kaminaris who said "**it was time.**" A few years later, after being bestowed with the glorious blessings of matrimony (yes, I did get to marry my

adorable Altar boy), my husband and I went to a meeting to discuss the future possibilities of expansion for our Saint Demetrios Complex. Well, he walked out as the Architecture Chairman, I came out as Marketing Chair. .. this time, the lady touching our lives was none other than Sophia Vendelis. After a decade of hard work with all the amazingly talented Building Committee members, you all know how that history unfolded. But shortly after we made the first footsteps toward the future expansion, Stephen & I became twice blessed with our twin sons, Daniel & Stephen. Guess what happened with them? On the very night of their birth, another Saint Demetrios child was born! So here they are in their very first hours of life, sharing the nursery at GBMC with a little girl who has become their Sunday School friend and Dance Troupe partner. Always, Saint Demetrios is weaved in and around our lives.

Well, time flies as it does when you're doing double duty, but one night, my mom & I decided to go to a meeting...this time it was for Philoptochos where the very dedicated Margo Lambros was President. Mrs. Margo got me inspired to do something new! Because being a mother of one-year-old twins didn't keep me busy enough, I got to chair the Fashion Show! A multitude of thanks to my family for their incredible support of that event. And, soon after, Stephen & I attend yet another meeting. This time, Mrs. Maria Antonakas is the one who tapped us on the shoulders and asked us to co-chair the Saint Demetrios 35th Anniversary Banquet with her and Mr. Manuel. In each and every one of these instances, someone is touching our lives and believing in us.

A few short years later, it was time for my children to go to Preschool. We were already up at church once a week with them at Little Angels. So I saw the wonder, the excitement that was surrounding the Saint Demetrios Preschool. I heard of a job opening at the school and was so excited to apply. Again, watch how the Holy Spirit moves us through our lives. This time, the Saint Demetrios person I am about to interview with is Jennie Kegel. I can't say enough about how amazing this lady is. She's a living blessing, an angel amongst us. She gave me the opportunity of a lifetime. To teach in God's school – an honor I will always hold deepest in my

heart. Seven years later, I still have the best job. I can truly say, I work **at home**. Today, our school goes to the 5th grade! Recently, the committee of The Orthodox Way has been hosting a terrific program. Every week, over 104 people have been in attendance. I love to see our community so electrified for their faith! Asking questions, talking about God, and coming to together to glorify His most Holy name. But allow me tell you that tomorrow, and the next day, and the day after that, every weekday, in that Educational Building, close to 60 of the cutest little angels you've ever seen come to school here. Our Orthodox children... living, walking, embracing the faith **every school day**. Saint Demetrios is the only mid-Atlantic full-time Day school, teaching children educationally, culturally, and most of all, spiritually.

So how does this all relate to Stewardship? It doesn't relate, it is the fabric of stewardship. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines stewardship as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." This is God's home – He has entrusted us to be his caretakers. What an awesome responsibility. It's one that I know each and every of you takes to heart. Our families enjoy being here and giving their time, their talent, and their treasury to their church. And I know time is hard, especially in today's world. But again, **there's no place like home**. So why not get involved and spend time here. Something so exciting about this home is that we are always looking to the future. I know I can't wait to be a GOYA Advisor hopefully one day. And guess what, in just 7 short years, the 50th Anniversary of Saint Demetrios Church will be upon us! Planning for that milestone will have to start before we know it! Like you, we're always looking for what we can do next ! That brings me to the word talent!

When it comes to talents – every single one of you in the pews has God-given talents. I have seen so many of you use them. I encourage everyone young and old to discover how your talents can enrich our church. Then, of course, there's treasury. This is where we need to look internally at our own budgets. I'll give you a quick snapshot inside the Christ family budget:

Groceries - \$120.00/week

Verizon Fios - \$165.00/month

Soccer/Football/Basketball/Lacrosse/Baseball registrations & Music Lessons - \$1,976 per year – plus team pictures/parties/new cleats/and sports equipment

Two smartphones - \$125.00/ month

My personal favorite anti-aging cream as seen on Dr. Oz- \$150 year

Season Tickets to the Ravens - \$1800/ year

Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church – **PRICELESS**

A Faith-Based Education at Saint Demetrios Day School – **PRICELESS**

When you stop and look at your expenses, you really see where your money goes and what you are spending it on. So I ask you as we are celebrating this Stewardship month, to examine your own budgets and see what you can do for your church. Fill out this beautiful Commitment Card and hand it in. One really helpful thing we did last year was sign up for Network for Good. It was the simplest thing we did. Right on our church's website, you'll find the link. In a matter of a few short minutes, you are all set up. Now, every month our Stewardship is charged to our credit card. We never have to worry about forgetting to bring our envelope to church or being late with a payment because it comes out every month. It's easy breezy financing. We get an email alert a few days before the charge is made and again once it has occurred.

Saint Demetrios Church brings us all closer together as one unified family in Christ. We must always promise to take care of her. She's thriving – just look at this week –

Next up, we have a General Assembly Meeting, tomorrow night, you're going to get your phone call during the Stewardship Phone-athon. Tuesday, it's The Orthodox Way Bible Study, then we have Saint Demetrios Vespers and Reception, Divine Liturgy for the Feast

Day of Saint Demetrios, the Name Day Dance, and the Hope/JOY Halloween Party. But for our community, it's all in a week's worth!

In closing, I just want to thank you all for serving as examples to not only me, but to my husband, and most of all, our children. If you look at our Divine Liturgy, it says, "Let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole lives to Christ our God." How fitting this statement is for the community of Saint Demetrios Church. Our story of this beacon of light on the hill, is a story so embedded with people's dedication to this most blessed church and their love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has given us His most Holy House to love, honor and nurture and within us all He resonates that feeling **"There's no place like home."**