

**Homily by John Friedman  
Sunday, November 6, 2001**

**A little background on me.**

- dad Jewish and mom southern Baptist...married and became Episcopalian
- Episcopalian all my life...baptized in Bruton Parish Church
- been attending St. James the Less ever since we moved to Ashland about 8 years ago
- love sjtl for the same reason I love the town of Ashland...it feels right...it's the right fit ...like a comfortable shoe...SJTL is a comfortable shoe:)
- I love the beautiful church and grounds here and the people
- when Abby was born on Christmas Day, our first visitor was from SJTL, Jane Newchuk
- when my mom passed away after spending 5 1/2 weeks in intensive care after an accident, the funeral was held at my old church of about 25 years in Newport News. I saw two members of the congregation and 1 minister there from SJTL...that **meant a lot**...like a connection from my past life to my present life

**So...What is Stewardship?**

**Stewardship is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care....and what is entrusted to us...this magnificent church and all of her activities within.**

There's one thing about SJTL...everybody pitches in. Some people might pitch in too much. If they were to go on long vacation, we might be in trouble. It's much better when we can all share the load. What ministry are you involved in? Or, what ministry are you interested in becoming involved in?

\*\*\*\*\*nursery, Sunday school, youth groups, choir, alter guild, acolytes, supper club, adult forum, the free clinic, the grounds committee, ushers, vestry, search committee, Heavenly Creations, caritas to name a few...there is lots of good work to be done here and God wants everybody to join in. By being a steward, you can pledge your money and your service all for the Glory of God. And if you are wearing lots of hats and juggling ministries, maybe God wants you to slow down a bit and let someone else pitch in...**because I don't think that God wants you to get burned out**...because he wants you for an eternity:)

**We are blessed to have the congregation and ministers that we have. Everyone plays a vital role. Now with a new minister coming aboard, this is an exciting time. This is a time to dream. A time to dream. Aristotle once said,**

***Hope is a waking dream .***

We have so much to celebrate. God is always with us. But the times they are a changin' and if we want this church to be healthy not only now but twenty years from now, we need to do some changing too. **I don't see these changes as drastic**, but I do see them as necessary and urgent.

Let's dream. My dream is like a stained glass window, it has so many colorful and different parts and sometimes, it confuses me. I get confused a lot. I am not the sharpest tool in the shack. Let me think..... **Ahhhh**. Now my dream is becoming clearer...

- I dream of youth groups and *regulars at the Sunday service* getting to know each other and sharing time together...I want to attend a jr. and sr. high youth group activity because I am a kid at heart. I want more young people to stand up in church and talk about what they are doing and the challenges they are facing...**I want to be surprised by something I did not expect on Sunday morning.**
- Last week when the choir sang and performed the offertory anthem, my son Dylan stood up in the balcony. He heard that tambourine and the flute and an upbeat rhythm. He stood up because he wanted to see what was happening. I wanted to stand up too. It caught my attention. It made me want to stand up and start **movin' around**. And that communion song last week, Here I am Lord, I liked it because it made me feel inspired. It moved me. So, I want one guitar song a week. I want one song I can clap my hands to, and I want my kids to be able to sing out. And I want to be moved. Seek Ye First moves me. So does I am the Bread of Life.
- I dream of the choir leading us in one Shrinemont style song played on a guitar **once per week**. Remember, this is **MY** dream...I'm just dreaming...OUT LOUD. I want that guitar song to be a communion hymn. I want to be moved. Our SJTL songbook has about 24 songs that are Shrinemont favorites. I want to hear one every week. Lots of folks around here play guitars and if you miss a chord or so, it doesn't really matter.
- I want us to start focusing more on young members of the congregation and getting young families to come here and feel even more welcomed. Family life is getting busier than ever and families priorities are changing. Soccer and baseball may be important, **but**, families need the strength that comes from being one of God's flock. They need that strength now more than ever and they need to find it here.
- I dream of a children's mini sermon every Sunday...just about two minutes...maybe with a prop or a puppet. Kids love movin' around and Then I dream of them going into the library for children's church and returning to their parents in time for communion. Children's church isn't hard. We already have a plan for it.
- I dream of our kids becoming more involved in the Sunday service through regular performance of songs by children's choirs. Kids want to be involved. Last Sunday when Derrick Rosser asked Abby and Dylan if they would like to help him with the plates during offering, you should have seen their faces light up. That would be the most exciting thing they did over the weekend and I can't wait to see it happen! What could happen? Maybe a dropped plate or two...God's ok with that.
- I dream of more kids in the nursery and in Sunday school.
- I dream of an adult forum where participants can do just that, **participate** in discussions which address basic and everyday challenges of this existence. I am not looking for all the answers, but I want to be heard and I want to listen and I want to know I am not the only one who feels the way I feel. I want to grow spiritually because soon I will have two teenagers and I am going to need a lot of spiritual strength and fortitude.

God is with us right now. He is with us here at SJTL just like he has always been. And he is going to give us the strength to keep the faith like we have been doing here for years, and he is going to provide us with the courage to make the changes necessary for tomorrow. God's power is running high right here in Ashland and in Hanover. He's in the 23005 zip code...oh yes and he has his power turned up to 11, **not 10 but 11**. Do you know what that is? That's one higher. **God would not be denied** when that little boy was lost just miles from this place. When hope was fading, God was not going to be denied! Open your eyes and don't miss it...because God is performing miracles, right here.

**God knows.... This is OUR time to dream...and then our time to turn dreams to reality.**