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My aunt was born in Panama, but she was from Jamaica and a member of the Episcopal faith. When she and her husband moved to Crown Heights in Brooklyn, she looked for a church and found one, a couple of blocks from her home, and she went there one Sunday in 1950, and there was a white man standing at the door greeting people as they came to the church. And, as my aunt walked up, the greeter took a step to his right, crossed his arms, and said, "You must be looking for the colored church." And he pointed to the bus.

Well, my aunt was humiliated. But my aunt also had the nerve of failure. She had the courage to face the possibility of defeat without being morally defeated, and she returned to that church the next week. My aunt got my grandmother and many of my aunts to faithfully attend this church, until one day the priest read a notice that the church was going to be sold because of poor attendance. Well, my aunt and my grandmother took the Long Island Rail Road to visit the bishop of the diocese. And my grandmother said, "We build churches; we don't sell them." And the bishop offered them a deal. He said, "Well, if you can recruit at least 50 families to become tithing members of this church, we won't sell the church."

Well my aunt and grandmother took the bishop's offer and started recruiting people to join the church. The church was not sold, and, in fact, St. Mark's is the second largest Episcopal church in Brooklyn. At her funeral, the church was overflowing with people. Even the bishop came for the service.

And this was an important story, not just because she had remade the church in her own image, but she had shown how important it was for all of us, those who are black and those who are white, to link our fate to those who have been left out, marginalized, underrepresented.