

# Becoming a Member of St. Aidan's

by Michael Flowers

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*Michael Flowers emphasizes the importance of community, unity, and commitment in becoming a member of St. Aidan's Anglican Church.*

**Duration:** 21:32

**Scripture:** Genesis 13:8, Matthew 23:10, Matthew 25:40, Hebrews 13:17

**Topics:** "Anglican"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of clear communication and accountability within the church. He shares a story about four people named everybody, somebody, anybody, and nobody, highlighting how a lack of clarity and responsibility can lead to blame and unfulfilled tasks. The speaker then discusses the role of submission to church leaders and the mutual care that should exist within the congregation. He also emphasizes the significance of choosing a church family and the high view of the church as the body of Christ. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the importance of treating one another with love and kindness, as it is ultimately a reflection of our relationship with Christ.

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## Transcript

Well, I am speaking to the congregation of the Lord this morning, right? Y'all the congregation? I'm part of that congregation. Within the congregation of the Lord, this Sunday gathering, we love offering hospitality to everyone that comes through these doors, right? Those who visit us, those who are checking us out, checking you out. You know, people come to check you out.

They come to check me out, you out, and this out, and the temperature out, and the programs out. A little shopping cart down the aisle here. Here we go.

But that's all good because, you know, we have to make decisions. We have to have criteria for making decisions because, you know, choosing a church family is one of the most important decisions that you can make. We're just thanking God that within this congregation, there are people in very different places, right? It's been a little over five years, and so some of us have been here for the entire time.

All others are still sort of just coming in this year, perhaps late last year. And so it is a journey, walking with a body of people who want to be family. As we're dispersed so widely throughout the KC region, we're attempting to be family by intentional efforts.

Make every effort, Paul says, right? There's nothing wrong with effort. It takes effort, the grace of effort. Paul said, I worked harder than all of them.

Not I, but the grace of God. Right. So we need the effort of grace in building up the body of Christ.

We need the effort of grace speaking the truth in love as the body grows up into maturity. We're fine with different levels of involvement. And I mean, that's just reality.

I've done that myself in going to different churches here in KC before we planted this church. And I would move in and out of different places and trying to find home sometimes. Been there and done that as a pastor.

You didn't think I've done that, right? You think I've been in ministry all my life. There's been sabbaticals where I said, forget it. I'm going to go church shopping.

It's really not a fun thing. But listen, I found our people and used to be called Boiler Room and now they're called Nava. And that was an awesome place for us just to sit in and take in the worship and and the integrity of the leadership there.

Those brothers that we love dearly. And then during that time, I sense a calling and Liz sense that calling back to our roots as a liturgical church and what it might be to plant a liturgical church in the area. And we put that through a lot of discernment.

We put that through a lot of discernment. And some of you sitting here this morning, you were there. You walk through that discernment with us.

You were discerning the way. So it wasn't just Michael and Liz making the decision to plant this church. That won't happen in an Anglican church anyway.

So we had a team of people and we were eating together and we were loving each other and we were praying, oh, God, will you really do this crazy thing of planting a church in Casey? Little after that, we started gathering some folks and we started this little thing called Explore St. Aidan's. And so we've been running that, you know, over the five years. And today we're going to recognize some folks who actually went through that class.

So it's got two functions. It's got a function just to check out what we believe and more about the church with no commitment whatsoever. That's why it's called Explore St. Aidan's.

But then it has a dual purpose because it is for those who want to go deeper and make a verbal commitment to a group of people. This is my church. That is, these are my people.

You're not making a commitment to any institution or building. You're making a commitment to a whole body of people. When Jesus is talking about the temple of his body, that we are brothers and sisters through Jesus Christ.

We are, Paul says in Ephesians, we are that holy temple that God is building. We are the body of Christ. Very, very ontologically, just really, really connected by the spirit with the being of God knitting us together as one body.

How does that happen? It happens through drinking of one spirit. This is one thing that's often overlooked about baptism. It's not just into Christ as if Christ is separated from a body.

It's also into his death and resurrection. Of course, we participate in his death and resurrection. But in this passage, I love this.

First Corinthians 12, 13. For in one spirit, we were all baptized into one body. This is often overlooked in independent America.

We don't want to be baptized into a people. The writer of this text, Paul, encountered the risen the Lord, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He didn't say, why are you persecuting them? Why are you persecuting the church? He said, why are you persecuting me? Because we are so connected to Jesus that when we suffer, he suffers. He said it right there.

Why are you persecuting me? Now, this is a high view of the church, and we will not preach anything any lower than that. I mean, it's not worth giving your life for unless you get the fullness of the faith and the fullness of the church. And it's OK to think about the fullness of the church because it's the fullness of Christ.

It's not some separate topic, the church and the people of God, because those are the various members of the body of Jesus Christ. And how we treat one another, you've done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me. Yeah.

Isn't that great? We have to remind ourselves of this in our marriages. We have to remind ourselves of this in our relationships. It's so easy to forget and just go into that normal institutional mode where you just kind of go to church as if you're not church.

You are the church, right? Church is something that we are. Church is the ecclesia that called out ones. We've been called out into right now before the throne of God.

We've been called out of the world into the throne room together to hear word and receive sacrament today. And so with that, I was speaking with our bishop this week about membership in general. And we're kind of following their lead on how they do membership and how they at Church of the Resurrection in Wheaton, how they set membership up and all of that, their bylaws, everything.

We just said, hey, we just want to be what we want to do, what you're doing, because you know what you're doing. You've been doing this a long time. So we're just going to follow in your footsteps.

They've been working this out for 25 years with Stuart there, Bishop Stuart, as rector. OK, and so we're in good hands and we were talking about it. He said Anglicans have three sources of unity.

There's baptismal unity, there's Eucharistic unity, and then there's Episcopal unity. Episcopal meaning Episcopal, the Greek word for bishop. So there's baptismal unity, there's Eucharistic unity, and we've kind of got a feel of those two in the readings today.

Maintaining the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace that happens through our baptism. Right. We come into this thing called the body of Christ.

We're baptized into the body. And so everyone sitting in here in this congregation today, whether you've gone through Explore or not, we share baptismal unity as brothers and sisters in Jesus. And that is the

highest level of the royal priesthood you could ever have.

When you're baptized, everyone's baptized into the royal priesthood. We have Eucharistic unity. And this is this is different.

You know, we put it in a bulletin that all baptized Christians are welcome at the altar, welcome at the table. OK, we have Eucharistic unity with all Christians. Why not? Explorer class doesn't qualify you for the Eucharist.

I mean, that's that's that's a little high view of the Explorer class. I have a low view of the Explorer class. OK, high view of the Eucharist, but a higher view of the body of Christ and a higher view of baptismal unity, which qualifies you to take the Eucharist.

It's in that order, right? You come in, you're baptized into the body and then you eat the food that you need to make it through the journey into the wilderness, which is the manna, the bread. Right. The Eucharist.

So it has to come in that order. There are churches out there that let you take the Eucharist, not not Anglican or Catholic or Orthodox, but whether you've been baptized or not, you wouldn't have to be a believer and you're taking the body of Christ. I mean, read the New Testament about the dangers of these things.

We do this to protect you and our visitors coming. We want to recognize all who call on the name of the Lord, their Lord and ours. Those two levels of unity may be with us forever and never get to the third part, which we encourage.

But we understand we love you and we want you to walk with us, whether you're not ready to take the third leap into unity, Episcopal unity, which last summer our bishop came and laid hands on some 30 people and either received them because they'd already been confirmed or confirmed them for the first time. He's coming under his care as bishop over this diocese and he's praying for the power of the Holy Spirit to come on you. That's called Episcopal unity.

And that's coming under the leadership of the church. There's a passage here I want to read. Hebrews 13.

I mean, let me I want you to think about that as I'm reading this. If you have an authority grid as I read this, if you're cringing. All right.

You know what I'm saying? Verse 17. Now, I want you to hear this, first of all, with Michael to his bishop. All right.

That's where it begins. It begins with my submission to my bishop. Michael, obey your leader.

He says, obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over your souls. They keep watch over your souls as men who must give an account.

OK, first of all, my bishop must give an account for me. He's so brave to even take that upon himself. God, I tried my best.

Likewise. Now, this goes for all of us now. You need to obey your leaders and submit to their authority.

So they keep watch over your soul. So this is a mutual care thing where there's a relationship of care, not domination. It's a relationship of love, not control and pushing people around and misusing authority for those ends.

Let me know if you ever see me doing that. That's not right. I need to hear from you if you feel like that's what's happening from me.

Right. This is mutual accountability here. The body corrects itself.

But there does need to be that deference and that honoring of one another in this high view of the church that we're talking about. And it's not just do your own thing. I'm sorry.

I mean, that's not what Jesus says a disciple is. Take up your cross and do your own thing. It's not that way, but it takes a lot of trust to be submitted to authority and submitted to one another.

Submit one to another. In the fear of Christ, Paul says out of the fear of Christ, submit one to another. It's a beautiful thing when you can yield to another person in Jesus and honor them.

Right. That's what Abraham did when he was talking to Lot. Right.

This is Abraham's the father of our faith. He was talking to Lot and everything belonged to Abraham. Nothing belonged to Lot.

The covenant was given to him. But then he was talking a lot. You know, they there was strife in between the two because Lot wasn't supposed to go with him.

Right. And he took him anyway and caused trouble. So they they came to a point where they needed to sit down and talk and you go your way.

I'll go my way. And so Abraham said, you choose. You choose which way, what part of the land you want.

Wow. That was big of Abraham because Lot chose the shiny stuff. Sodom and Gomorrah.

Right. And Abraham went the other way. But that's the grace of yielding.

It all belonged to him. He had rights to all the land. But he laid down his rights.

In that situation. And there's a there's a lesson there for all of us. That can be taken too far.

It can be misapplied. I get all that. I've done this for 40 some years now.

I get it. But I don't want to minimize the beauty of what true submission in a context of love and obedience and trust can be. It's a beautiful thing.

Yes. It's the only way a spiritual father can be a spiritual father and a spiritual mother can be a spiritual mother. There is that relationship that Paul talks about where the older women teach and model and speak into the lives of younger women.

And the older men do that with the younger men. There's a beautiful relationship there that's been broken down by our culture. It won't be the church that Jesus wants until we can restore the family trust.

Amen. And so today we're going to celebrate those who wish to come under that Episcopal unity. Yeah, I want to go deeper.

I want to make a verbal commitment to this people called St. Aidan's. When we stand up today and we go through the membership liturgy, what we'll all be doing is making a verbal commitment to one another. It's not like Anglicanism.

It's not that. It's not a qualification. To believe in infant baptism.

To come under the Episcopal unity of our church. It's a qualification that you're baptized and that you will baptize your children. But we don't say an age.

That's up to you because that's your authority to make that. So they can be infants or they can be at the age of accountability. That's up to you.

That's not a qualifier here. I just want to say that we honor infant baptism. We honor all stages of baptism because Jesus is the baptizer.

Nobody baptizes Jesus. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. John said.

You know, it's good to know who you can count upon before they're counted upon. I'll read you a little story. This is great.

This is the power of membership right here. This is the story about four people named everybody, somebody, anybody and nobody. You heard this.

There is an important job to do. And everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it, but nobody did it. Somebody got angry because it was everybody's job. Everybody thought anybody could do it.

Nobody realized that everybody would do it. It ended up that everybody blamed somebody when nobody did what anybody could have done. And that's the story of the church sometimes, isn't it? That's the story of groups.

That's the story of teams in the secular world. Not clear communication of the task involved and who will be involved and how you can. You know, that whole thing is just left open and assumed it'll just take care of itself.

Eighty percent of the giving is done by 20 percent of the congregation. Eighty percent of the ministries are done by 20 percent of the congregation. Now, that is a well-known statistic.

And we're here to break it. We're here to break it. We're going for 100 percent.

But that takes time and that takes allowance for that whole sort of, yeah, I'm here and all of that. But know that that is the goal, that we're all called to be ministers in Jesus Christ. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We now welcome these persons who wish to join with the body of Christ, the people of St. Aidan's Anglican Church. Dear friends, is it your wish to make this community of faith, St. Aidan's Anglican

Church, your church family? And the people with whom you will share your journey of faith? Is this the place and are these the people with whom you will seek to make sense of the issues of your life, your dreams, your faith, who you are and what you are to do, who God calls you to be? Is it your wish to make this community the arena where you will grow and mature in Christ, where you will listen to the story of God's salvation and the good news of Jesus Christ, allowing Jesus to be your Lord and Savior? Where you are called to a life of ministry and compassion, where you receive the grace of Christ in word and sacrament? Will you commit yourself to seek and serve Christ in union with this community of faith? Will you seek to live out the mission of this congregation by living in Christ and helping others become fully alive in Christ? Will you worship God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, and embrace each other as living members of Christ, his redeemed community, and live daily on his mission? Will you pledge your spiritual, social and financial support in the mission of this parish family? Rector to the congregation, will you, who are witnessing these promises, share the joys and sorrows and do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ? Rector to the congregation, will you uphold them and embrace their gifts, their needs and their dreams? Will you recognize that their presence and participation will change the shape of the body and help it grow in new ways? Will you encourage in their devotion to Christ and assist them in their ministry? Yes, yes, yes. Loving God, send your Holy Spirit to be among us, knitting us one to another.

Help us to grow with each other, to love each other and to support each other in Christ. That by our common life in Christ, the world may know that we are your sons and daughters and be drawn into the Father's house of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Amen.

As the rector of this parish and speaking for the entire congregation, I welcome each of you as active members in the body of St. Aidan's. May the Holy Spirit empower us now and always. Everyone.

Amen.

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