

September 22, 2015

Dear Rev. Foster

It is a privilege to join generations of those praying God's blessings on the family known as Severna Park United Methodist Church on the occasion of 50 years of service to our Lord.

As your first female Senior Pastor, my heart skips several beats as I recognize the line of history begun with the leadership of a man, small in stature and unassuming in nature, the Rev. Edgar Beckett, who touched many lives including my own, as a 17 year old teenager asking our Washington West District Superintendent to be the keynote speaker at our Sr. High Retreat. No one, especially some 17 year old would think of bothering a District Superintendent to do such a thing...but I asked...and he agreed. As the weather took several turns for the worse, he kept on and drove hours through what was to become the worst blizzard of that year. Once there, he generously shared his overwhelming kindness and compassion for hours on end.

Years later, unable to afford a clergy robe due to the school expenses on which my husband and I were trying to complete payments (I was serving First, Hyattsville at the time) I happened to find hanging in the clergy supply closet a very old, worn black academic robe Rev. Beckett had left at the church. Once again, Rev. Beckett to the rescue! Years later, in 1999, when the Bishop appointed me to Severna Park UMC I could barely comprehend the fact that Rev. Beckett was a leading part of this Christian family as well (they first met in one of the local houses across from the High School).

I still have his robe, much to the amusement of some of my colleagues. I cherish that robe and all the memories it holds.

I wanted to share this perhaps overly long part of my experiences with Rev. Beckett because I believe it is an important part of how all history works - one man and one woman and one child at a time, willing to share what blessings they are able....love as best they are able after the example of Jesus....and welcome all into our Church Family with open hearts, spirits and minds.

This is what we celebrate this weekend. It is a history rich in Christian efforts. It is a future filled with hope and loving anticipation of all the blessing to come. It is the present - a gift - of a new day.

Your Sister in Christ,

Rev. Joanne W. Klanda