

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

Reverend Irvin Eugene Beverly Sr.

Interviewed by Alma Jordon

March 27, 2025

At Bethesda United Methodist Church in Valley Lee, Maryland

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Alma Jordon ([00:02](#)):

Good morning. My name is Alma Jordon, and I'm at Bethesda United Methodist Church on St. George's Church Road in Valley Lee, Maryland. Today is March 27th 2025. And we have with us today, your full name?

Irvin Beverly ([00:25](#)):

Irvin Eugene Beverly Sr.

Alma Jordon ([00:33](#)):

Okay. And additionally, we have?

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([00:34](#)):

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr.

Merideth Taylor ([00:35](#)):

Merideth Taylor.

Ilene Beverly ([00:37](#)):

Ilene Beverly.

Alma Jordon ([00:39](#)):

Thank you. Tell me about your people and where you were raised.

Irvin Beverly ([00:46](#)):

Well, I was born in Lusby, Maryland, over in Calvert County, just a mile north of Solomon's Island. Born to a family of... My mom had 10 children. My two older sisters were much older than me. I was a 4th child, and my older sister was married when I was born, at 18.

[\(01:15\)](#):

And my sister younger than her, Thelma, was adopted by the pastor who was there at the time, who had no children. And he was a pastor at St. John's Church. And when he left St. John's Church, he went back to Anne Arundel County, and they took Thelma with them as their daughter.

[\(01:44\)](#):

So, I had two siblings that actually didn't actually grow up with me, and they were both grown. So, when I was born, there was eight of us. We were members, Mama was a member, very active member with the St. John's United Methodist Church in Lusby, and a very dedicated member, sang on the choir, did everything she could.

[\(02:13\)](#):

Mom was born in 1906, and very little education. She went to the 6th grade, but was excellent in her learning. I don't know who it was that taught her, but she was much better at learning than a lot of people in the community. So, at the church, she became a great leader. People followed her.

[\(02:38\)](#):

And we went to church, from the time I was born, every Sunday. We lived, one of the closest to the church, so we were in walking distance. And Mama would get us on Sunday morning and get us all dressed, and we would march from the house together to the church for Sunday School.

[\(02:57\)](#):

And so, I grew up, actually, in the church, and at 16, I became the Sunday School leader of, whatever you want to call, the children. So, I taught the children, the young children of what I knew what mom taught me all of my life, even my older siblings, those that were older than me. I was more interested in the church.

[\(03:25\)](#):

And so, that kind of be a challenge with me when we got back home, being younger than the ones that were older than me and I'm telling them what to do. And so, I grew up in Lusby. We went to a one-room school, six grades. Actually, six grades in that school. Maybe that was the reason why Mama had six grades.

[\(03:50\)](#):

And then, at the proper age that you would go to finish elementary school at six years old, I don't remember what age I would have been, I went to junior high school in Prince Frederick, and we had to ride a bus then. And I'm kind of speed up a little bit because I don't want to just detail.

[\(04:14\)](#):

But in Sunday School I became a very good teacher. Well-learned with the Bible. I just loved the Bible. Now, I still do. And so, because of that, I actually became a leader in the church. Even the pastor used to depend on me for the children, for gathering the children. I had a good personality, and so, everybody loved being around me, all the neighbor's children too.

[\(04:42\)](#):

Even those that were older than me respected me because of my demeanor, I suppose, and my patience with them and my gift of giving them the opportunity to be who they were when they were not capable of doing, but not make them feel less than who they were, make them feel good. So, I became, actually, a good teacher.

[\(05:08\)](#):

So, after graduating from high school in Lusby, I went through the 11 grades, and then, eventually, it got to be 12, but when I graduated from high school, my Aunt Gertrude, who lived in Philadelphia, had a school. She had a school in Philadelphia, a tailoring school, 5719...

[\(05:36\)](#):

No, she had a tailoring school in in Germantown where she taught veterans tailoring. So, I actually went to school there learning tailoring, and then became, actually, a teacher there. She also had a beauty parlor in West Philadelphia, 5719 Girard Avenue where she taught the community, but in Germantown, she had veterans from World War II.

[\(06:10\)](#):

And so, once I became good at tailoring, I became a teacher there at a very young age, teaching veterans tailoring. I went and moved in with them at 18 or 19. I had been there, I don't know, three or four years, I'm trying to remember the years.

[\(06:29\)](#):

And I taught a lot of the veterans, who respected me as being a kid. These kids, they were in World War II, so you can imagine the difference in our age. But still, to be able to manage them and teach them so they didn't feel like I was overpowering them or under the ability, at least to be able to teaching veterans, really, how to be a tailor.

[\(07:00\)](#):

And I was good. So, I did that for two years, and then I decided that I should come back home with my children after being there. So, I came back home, back down to Lusby after teaching those for two years. And we had a dry-cleaning plant in Prince Frederick.

[\(07:24\)](#):

And so, I went to the dry-cleaning plant and asked the manager, Tucker's Cleaners it was, Roland Tucker was his name. He fell in love with me. He was Caucasian, and I was just a young, the way you can see what I am. But he did, just like I was his son, just like Aunt Gertie did.

[\(07:47\)](#):

And so, I became his tailor, and I did tailoring for all of Calvert County. People came from everywhere to... And then, I decided I would open up a tailor shop. So, I did, back down in Lusby, where I became my own boss. And I only went to the cleaners on weekends. And I got to the place I've become the manager. I'm still a young kid.

[\(08:14\)](#):

On Saturdays at 12:00, the management would leave the building and I would stay there until 5:00 in the afternoon to close it. And the customers were always amazed to come in, and these

were senior people, well-off in Prince Frederick, educated people that would come in, and I was managing a dry-cleaning plant.

[\(08:45\)](#):

And I became their tailor, and people fell in love with me there. It just seemed like everywhere I went, there was something that touched people's hearts, that made them, should I say, accept me as being in a place that I ought not be doing something I ought not have the ability to do. And that's just the way where my life has been.

[\(09:09\)](#):

So, I opened a tailor shop, and I was a tailor. I'm trying to remember all of these years that I did the tailoring shop. And it was between my home in Lusby and Solomon's Island, on Route 2, going back and forth from Solomon's to Annapolis. My shop was there close, right in the community, and so, I became the community tailor, just...

[\(09:37\)](#):

And I owned the shop, and people used to come in and couldn't believe that I'd be not only the manager, but actually, the operator. And they did the same, it's the... People just respected me and my ability.

[\(09:54\)](#):

And now, I'm not... I'm what, I can't remember how old I was, but now, I'm not only young, black, and got a business that's catered to white people. And they didn't see me as being black. They saw me as having the ability to do what it was I was doing with the respect and the satisfaction that they actually received from the work that I did.

[\(10:22\)](#):

And this is, because it's way back then in a lot of years. I was 18. I stayed in Philadelphia two years after I graduated from the tailoring school.

Alma Jordon ([10:34](#)):

At 18?

Irvin Beverly ([10:35](#)):

And I had become the tailor there in the school also, teaching older men who respected me. And some of them opened tailoring shops. Some of the people that I taught opened tailoring shops, actually, while I was still there, based on the skills that they had gotten, actually, from me, just a kid compared to them.

[\(11:03\)](#):

Like I said, these people who had been into the military, and again, come home, and now had become a businessman of their own, to be able to still come back and associate with me and let folk, their customers know who it was that taught them.

[\(11:27\)](#):

I'm still young, and like I said, these are retired, or not retired, most of them were disabled veterans from the war. That was why they were out of the service at such young ages, because they were actually disabled veterans.

[\(11:44\)](#):

And I stayed there for, I don't know, two, three years, and then, I decided I had to come back home. Aunt Gertrude was very disappointed because I was her... She didn't have any children either, so I became her son, also, for the years. But she had a home in Lusby, so they came back and forth, and I was always a part, and she was a part of being with me and actually opening the business there.

[\(12:12\)](#):

Not a whole lot of money because the gentleman who owned it, it was a little service station right on the side of Route 2, and they served gas and had gas pumps, or whatever, and I used that building. They closed the station down. So, that was how I got access to the empty building that was there, and started my tailoring.

[\(12:36\)](#):

And so, then, that went on to the point where, now I'm grown now. I got married at 22, or something like that, and aging. Now, I'm starting to be a father now. So, I got a son, Irvin Jr. And we did that for a while.

[\(12:58\)](#):

And then, from there, while I was still there at the shop, my youngest sister, Claudette, who was my baby sister, was now 12, 13, something like that. And our neighbor, which was my cousin, lived next door to us, she had smaller children. And Claudette loved children. She just loved children.

[\(13:23\)](#):

And our neighbor had a little girl, a baby girl that fell in love with Claudette and Claudette fell in love with her. So, our neighbor, Ernestine, Claudette almost became her daughter, or her baby's sister, or whatever.

[\(13:40\)](#):

So, Claudette used to follow her step by step just to be with that baby. Ernestine lived in Dowell, which was half a mile from Solomon's off of the Dowell Road. But yeah, actually, down in Solomon's.

Alma Jordon [\(13:58\)](#):

Ernestine was your sister too?

Irvin Beverly [\(13:59\)](#):

No, Ernestine was my cousin's wife who lived next door to us. I'm sorry about that. Ernestine married my cousin, Nat, which was Ben's son. And so, Nat's father was mama's brother.

Alma Jordon [\(14:20\)](#):

Ah.

Irvin Beverly ([14:21](#)):

Okay. So, now, there we go. So, this is my first cousin, actually, and we've been Claudette's first cousin also. And she fell into love with the baby. I'm getting to the story of what you're asking me about the rest of my life.

([14:38](#)):

So, Ernestine's family lived in Dowell, which is just above Solomons. Still there, black community. And so, on Sunday afternoons after morning service, Ernestine would always go down to her mother's in Dowell, and Claudette would go with her because of the baby. So, Claudette was like the baby's sister, her guardian, or whatever. But she just loved babies.

([15:09](#)):

And we would, on Sundays, Ernestine would go down to her mother's. Claudette is now 12, 13. I'm trying to guess at the age. But she just loved this little baby. She would go with Ernestine to take care of the baby. She followed her.

([15:31](#)):

And in the evening time on Sundays, this would always be on Sundays Claudette would go, she was there because we were neighbors right next to each other. Claudette was with the baby whenever she was there as much as she could. But she would go with Ernestine to take care of the baby, of the little girl.

([15:50](#)):

And this particular Sunday, one particular Sunday when Claudette was 13, I was very young, I'm trying to remember the right ages. I had already had still had a business. I'm running a business here now at my age. I'm still a tailor. I have people that's working with me. And then, I had moved from there, I moved to the cleaner shop.

([16:13](#)):

This was... I'm getting ahead of myself. I had the business before I went to the dry cleaning plant. I had run the business first, and went to the dry... And that was how I got there because the owner of the dry cleaning plant saw how good a business I was doing with my tailoring, and he invited me to come to work for him there, and then I got to be a part of that for quite a few years.

([16:43](#)):

I knew everybody in Prince Frederick. I loved the people, people loved me, and just had a good skill because God had blessed me through my Aunt Gertie. I'm telling you all of these things... So, all of these people were a part of my life at different times that didn't even know each other.

([17:01](#)):

But it all had to do with Aunt Gertie accepting me as her son, who took me to Philadelphia, educated me, allowing me to come back home and do all these other things. I'm still young. Anyway, but this particular Sunday we went down to Dowell.

[\(17:24\)](#):

I carried them down to Dowell, and in the evening I would go back and pick them up and bring Claudette and Ernestine and her baby. Ernestine had about three or four kids, but Claudette was interested in the baby. And Ernestine would only take, usually, the baby with her when she went down on Sundays.

[\(17:45\)](#):

And this particular Sunday we were coming back from down there with Ernestine and the two children beside the baby that Claudette... Claudette was in the car, and I was driving. And my youngest brother, Francis, he was younger than me, the next one under me, before Claudette. It was three of us here; me, Francis, Claudette. She was the baby.

[\(18:17\)](#):

We got in the car to go get... and Francis came running to get in the car to go, and I played a game on him and left him behind. He was running saying, "Wait for me!" And I just laughed, and we went. So, I went down and picked up a Claudette.

[\(18:35\)](#):

On our way back, when we got back to Route 2 from Dowell, it's about less than a half a mile from Dowell Road to Solomon's Island, and my tailoring shop where I had been was just up the road from Dowell Road, when we got back, that four coming back that Sunday afternoon, Claudette was sitting in the back behind me with the baby in her lap.

[\(19:03\)](#):

Ernestine was sitting on the right side, with her other two children between her and Claudette. When we were coming down the road, when we got right to where my tailoring shop had been...

Alma Jordon ([19:17](#)):

Go ahead.

Irvin Beverly ([19:20](#)):

Yeah. A drunk driver came down the road and coming straight to me. So, I moved off the side of the road, right pretty much at the building where I used to be. And the driver hit us head-on. And Claudette was on that side with the baby in her lap. It threw Claudette out of the car with the baby still in her arms.

[\(19:49\)](#):

And Ernestine-they were injured, but not thrown out of the car. They were still trapped in the car. I was trapped in the car, still in the driver's seat. And the driver was intoxicated, was drunk. That was how the driver hit us, he was drunk. And the driver was Caucasian, hit us. So, the ambulance came.

[\(20:18\)](#):

Claudette and the baby died that day. And they had me dead also. But they carried me to the hospital. They carried Tina and the rest of the kids, but they kept them. They carried me to the hospital also. And when I got there, they pronounced me dead at the hospital.

(20:39):

And they had Claudette and the baby in the hospital, they told me this, Claudette and the baby at the morgue at Calvert Hospital at that time. And there were no more room in the morgue to put caskets, so they had put Claudette and the baby in the morgue. And they had me on a stretcher outside the morgue because there was no room for me in there.

(21:09):

And this is on a Sunday afternoon. And like I said, the doctors already pronounced me dead. And later on that evening, they told me this, I'm sharing with you, they said that they had sent me there because there's no other room.

(21:25):

And all the families and all of the communities and everybody from everywhere had come, black folk, when they heard about the accident. So, the hospital was actually filled, the yard was filled with us, but they wouldn't let people come in because it was just too many people.

(21:43):

The ambulance, only one ambulance came. The guy that hit us with Claudette and the baby and me still in the car, Claudette in the road, the ambulance came and got the guy that hit us, who only had a knee injury, put him in the ambulance, carried him to Prince Frederick, left us laying in the road there.

(22:12):

So, our people, black people, put us in cars and carried us to Prince Frederick, and the sheriff came and arrested all of them for removing our family from the scene of the accident before the ambulance driver would get back down there to us laying in the road. He had a knee injury.

(22:39):

The sheriff came back to the hospital and gave all the black people a ticket, that moved us out of the road that day, in the hospital. Later on, for me, I'm going back to me, I was laying outside the [inaudible 00:23:03] ...

Ilene Beverly (23:03):

Stop hitting the table.

Irvin Beverly (23:05):

And when all these people that they would allow in the hospital was coming in crying, my family was crying, and I was laying there, and I heard somebody say, this is the God's truth, they had pronounced me dead. "Is he dead too?" And I said, "No! I'm not dead."

(23:29):

And someone came in, because I had been laying there for two or three hours, and pulled the sheet off of my face that, the blood had dried. And when they pulled the blood off of my face, it woke me up, and I sat up. They're telling me this. And I said, "I'm not dead!" I heard him say, "Is he dead too?" I heard somebody say, "Is he dead too?" And I says, "No, I'm not dead."

[\(24:04\)](#):

And then, they uncovered me, and then they put me in a room in a hospital bed, actually. And then, I passed out. When I came to again, it was four days later. This was on a Sunday. It was on a Thursday when I came to, they had already had the funeral for my sister and for my cousin, which would have been the baby she had in her lap, because they wouldn't tell me that Claudette-them were dead until after they had buried her because I was still in the hospital sick.

[\(24:43\)](#):

So, when I actually came to and was told what had happened, and all of these things, I was in the hospital then, and I'm still young. That's when my life then changed to another whole new level, and I became the miracle of Lusby. People wanted to come and imagine how I could be dead for what, three hours, and then, here somebody says he's dead too and then get up and became whatever, that I actually became...

[\(25:20\)](#):

All of this I'm telling you happened... I forgot to tell you, before I went to Philadelphia, because I was still young, 18, and that was why Ann Gertrude took me with her there, to get me away from what's going on in the community, to just be separated for a while.

[\(25:46\)](#):

And from there, I finally, after the business, I closed and stopped. I came back to the church and became a member of St. John and became one of, what I said, the miracles of St. John, and a leader among even the seniors who has highly respected me only because of what God had done through me to this community, and the fact that I was who I was and had no desire to bring no charges against the person who had did...

[\(26:22\)](#):

Because people were saying, "You know, why, why don't you sue him? Or why don't you..." And I'm saying to myself, "That's not who I am. I mean, I believe that God is going to take care of him." Eventually, he did die not long after that because of the alcohol that he used to drink.

[\(26:46\)](#):

But they had a trial, his family, he did, and sued mama for me being in the accident with the guy that hit us on the wrong side of the road. And they had a court date, and he won at the court date. He proved in court that I was at fault when he hit us on the right side of the road, killed my sister and my first cousin, put me in the hospital. He won in Prince Frederick Court.

[\(27:25\)](#):

And the judge listened. I was there. They carried me. I gave up my testimony, and the judge said like this, during the time, he could feel what we were going through as a family. And when they finished, when the lawyer finished his case, the judge sat back and he said, "Something very wrong has gone on here, here today has gone on."

[\(27:55\)](#):

And he said, "But I cannot find, based on y'all's testimony, and the fact that the person whom you're testifying against don't remember." I said, "I'm telling you what I know is what I know when I left home. But when I left home, and when I went and picked Claudette-them up down at the thing, in between there and the accident, I still don't know other than what everybody told me."

[\(28:25\)](#):

And the judge said, "Something here very evil has happened." But he said, "I don't have any other choice but to find this man innocent because nobody here can give me enough information to convict him." So, they let him go. And that was when God started using me from this time onward.

[\(28:58\)](#):

Later on, he ended up having another accident and killed himself. Because it just didn't work. And so, from that point on, I actually got into the church and I became a leader in the church with older people, young people.

[\(29:18\)](#):

And I got to the point where I actually became a pastor whenever the pastor wasn't there. I'm still young, and they would get me to be the leader, actually, of the church. Senior people. And this went on for a long time, eventually until I was the lay leader. I went to the conference and got all of the training to be the leader that I was there.

Alma Jordon [\(29:50\)](#):

This was at St. John's? You were there?

Irvin Beverly [\(29:51\)](#):

This was St. John's United Methodist Church in Lusby.

Alma Jordon [\(29:57\)](#):

And that was your first church?

Irvin Beverly [\(30:01\)](#):

No, I was not pastor there, I was just a lay leader there whenever the pastor wasn't, but I was like his right-hand person when... My sisters sang, the three of... all of them had beautiful voices, and my older sister played the piano, and so she was a musician.

[\(30:23\)](#):

And so, I became one of the singers in the choir with my sister. And I could sing pretty good too, and so, I just learned how to sing by them. And this just became a group. And because of that, then we started going from church to church, my sisters, as a singing group.

[\(30:45\)](#):

And then, from that, we went just everywhere, and everybody over here, I'm sorry, everybody over here, we went from church to church, from St. George's Island down to St. Indigo's, all the way to the end of wherever, and Calvert, Charles St. Mary's, wherever, Anne Arundel, as a singing group there.

[\(31:06\)](#):

And then, the folk here at Bethesda had heard me sing and heard me preach and heard me do all the things that I had done, and they then called and asked me if I would come be here because the pastor here was ill. What was he, Reverend-

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr [\(31:23\)](#):

Reverend Curstis.

Irvin Beverly [\(31:23\)](#):

... Curtis, Harvey Curstis. And me and Reverend Harvey Curstis, while he was ill, became good friends. And when he couldn't get to here at the church, he would get me to be here to fill the in between. And then, through that... I'm skipping things because I don't want to keep you too long.

[\(31:46\)](#):

Because of that, then Reverend Curstis then was unable to be the pastor here. But he was still the pastor, he was unable to function. And then, he gave me his position in the pulpit to do what he was doing even while he was here. And of course, and then he passed, and then, the folk here wanted me to pastor.

[\(32:08\)](#):

And so, Reverend Curstis then got in touch with his district superintendent of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, explained to them who I was and why I was here, and what kind of training should I be able to have to replace him because he was unable to come.

[\(32:32\)](#):

And so, I started that training through the Conference, legally, to be a pastor. And when Reverend Curstis passed, I had done such a good job, they asked me if I would stay here as pastor. And I agreed. And then, Brother Nat and all of them-

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr [\(32:52\)](#):

Yes.

Irvin Beverly [\(32:54\)](#):

... actually, all of the people here that actually, to this very day, highly respected me no matter what age they were, and the fact that I wasn't, at some of the time, I was not always younger, but not older than them. But I just learned to be who God had called me to be. And 25 years and I'm still here.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr [\(33:13\)](#):

Amen.

Alma Jordon ([33:19](#)):

You're here at this beautiful campus of Bethesda United Methodist Church-

Irvin Beverly ([33:21](#)):

Thank you.

Alma Jordon ([33:22](#)):

... that is over 190 years old.

Irvin Beverly ([33:24](#)):

Amen.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([33:24](#)):

Yes.

Alma Jordon ([33:27](#)):

And do you remember or do you know what the church was before it became United Methodist?

Irvin Beverly ([33:36](#)):

Well, it was just the Methodist Church. We were just plain Methodist. But the Methodist joined with it, what was the other portion of the church? They united with another church-

Ilene Beverly ([33:51](#)):

Conference.

Irvin Beverly ([33:52](#)):

Yeah, another denomination to become United Methodist. It was... I'm trying to remember, the Methodist Church and...

Ilene Beverly ([33:59](#)):

Brotherhood.

Alma Jordon ([33:59](#)):

Well-

Irvin Beverly ([33:59](#)):

Huh?

Ilene Beverly ([34:03](#)):

Brotherhood.

Irvin Beverly ([34:03](#)):

I think, yeah, United Brotherhood Church joined together and became the United Methodist Church, and I became their...

Alma Jordon ([34:10](#)):

And I understand that this church wasn't always an African-American church. It was previously a white church?

Irvin Beverly ([34:18](#)):

Yes, yeah.

Alma Jordon ([34:18](#)):

Uh-huh?

Irvin Beverly ([34:19](#)):

And actually, the members who came here were slaves to the owners of the property. So, this was actually a white church, from what I've been told here at the time by Brother Nat and-

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([34:31](#)):

That is the truth.

Irvin Beverly ([34:32](#)):

That is the truth. And so, when Brother Curstis came, he replaced the white pastor, I suppose, that was here, and then we became the United Brotherhood, and the Methodist Church became the United Methodist Church. Yeah, thank you. I think it's the thing that we did, and I've been doing...

([34:55](#)):

But I have been... God has blessed me, with all of the years that I had been here, that there were district superintendents who was in charge of the United Methodist, and Bishops who, because of, I guess, my ability and my connection with the people, and being able to even be a pastor to them, from being Methodist to United Methodist Church, they left me here all these many years.

Alma Jordon ([35:22](#)):

25 years.

Irvin Beverly ([35:22](#)):

25 years.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([35:22](#)):

25 years.

Irvin Beverly ([35:25](#)):

And I just, right now, even the district superintendents, who will change every four years, the one that we have now, I go to a meeting, and she will single me out and call me out and calling me out in front of whomever, whatever church we in, and call my name, not telling them any history.

([35:44](#)):

And I guess people keep wondering, "Who in the world is that person that she keeps singling out." Because their people got degrees, master's, doctor degrees, whatever. In a group of all of them, she call my name, yeah, and kind of-

Alma Jordon ([36:05](#)):

I don't mean to interrupt, but before-

Irvin Beverly ([36:06](#)):

No, please do.

Alma Jordon ([36:07](#)):

... before I forget to ask you this question, can you tell me a little bit about SMILE and how you got involved in it and what it is?

Irvin Beverly ([36:18](#)):

30 years ago, we, the church, decided that we needed to do something for the community. And so, we had about 10, 12 people who formed this organization that we call SMILE. Service Makes Individual Lives Exciting is what the meaning of the church is.

([36:44](#)):

So, these 12 churches put together, and we became SMILE, and I was one of the members of SMILE. I still am after all these years. It's been 37 years also. But we have an organization where we collect items that people give away, and started a-

Alma Jordon ([37:11](#)):

Thrift shop.

Irvin Beverly ([37:11](#)):

... thrift shop. That's the right word. We started a thrift shop where people would donate items, and we started in one of the churches. And then, we would sell the item back to people for... Because we're talking about people that didn't have any money or they didn't have... So, it's just a...

[\(37:33\)](#):

And then, it got to be going so good, then we decided that maybe we should feed them too. So, then, we opened up the food pantry there at SMILE. And then, we became a big organization. Even I was been president twice over those years.

[\(37:51\)](#):

And I think I was the only one of us that looked like me there. And all the people in all these churches, different denominations, all of the denominations in Southern Maryland there accepted me as being a part of them, amen, and never saw my color at all.

[\(38:10\)](#):

And God knows, this is the truth. Even to this day I go there and people who just don't even know who I am because I never even tell them who I am or how long I've been there or how much I know, I just show up and... I'm the only person, I've been saying this, and God knows this is the truth, who have a parking spot that they don't let nobody park in.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr [\(38:36\)](#):

That's great...

Irvin Beverly [\(38:38\)](#):

Did I say that right?

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr [\(38:39\)](#):

That's great.

Irvin Beverly [\(38:42\)](#):

Yeah. Nobody parks in... If I don't get there that day, nobody parks in that parking spot that day I had been there. That's the position that they had allowed. So, what I became came at SMILE was one of the people who had the responsibility of, when they came to SMILE for finances, go through the office, the secretary would get all the information from the person, the amount they needed, electric bill, whatever it was.

[\(39:13\)](#):

We were particular about what you could get money for. We ain't paying for no cars, automobiles, or all those kinds of... Mostly, it was going to be for food, clothes, or for electric bills mostly was most people's problems. Gas bills, oil bill, we would go to...

[\(39:34\)](#):

And then, I became the person in charge of that particular field. So, they would go in and register at SMILE, still do, and then they would get all the information from the person, and then give them my number, and then they would call me, and then, I would take care of making the payment to SMECO to keep the power from being cut off, or the oil company to bring them oil if they were out of oil, or whatever it was that required money, it would have to come through me.

[\(40:07\)](#):

And I did that for years, a lot of years, and it worked out very well. So, it just became to a place where, because I was the money person, there was nobody in Lusby that didn't know me. Because they would tell somebody, "I had this, and I called Reverend Beverly." And they all called me Reverend. I just respected that too.

[\(40:35\)](#):

And they would call me, and I would get the information from them, call SMECO and make the pledge on their account for whatever it was that they needed the money for, and then, SMECO would accredit it to their accounts.

[\(40:55\)](#):

So, I've been paying electric bills and gas bills and oil bills and all these kinds of doctor bills, whatever, for years until we at a place now where times have changed. So, I'm kind of moot, and my age is changing too. My ability hadn't changed any, nor has my love or the respect that people show me, black and white.

[\(41:19\)](#):

Nobody has ever, yet, mentioned my complexion or my nationality as being something different than the person that was willing to give to people whom I didn't know, didn't know their background, didn't know even if I call SMECO.

[\(41:34\)](#):

They say they had a guy call SMECO to find out what it was. If it was within the area that I could keep the power from being cut off or pay the whole bill, there was always going to be... I won't give [inaudible 00:41:48] about actually how much money they would get.

[\(41:53\)](#):

But this was for people that I didn't know and didn't know me, and people I'd never seen before until they come through SMILE. Then it became a place where, because of the food pantry, the people that could get financial assistance also came to the pantry. And then, people, every now and then I'd run into people and they say, "Oh, you're the person that'd been paying my electric bill."

[\(42:15\)](#):

They had no idea who I was or what I looked like. It did not make any difference to them. And so, I'm still doing that. Now, I'm at a page, I'll be 89 in a month, and I'm not as good as I used to be, still as good-looking, but not as... I always say that every now and then, but in remembrance, or actually, in being able to do some of the things.

[\(42:43\)](#):

But I still get respected by all of the people in the community as to who I am. And I never even tell a lot of the people there. They call me a Reverend, I'm a pastor. They don't know if I got a church or not.

Alma Jordon [\(42:57\)](#):

Well, do you-

Irvin Beverly ([42:57](#)):

Did-

Alma Jordon ([42:57](#)):

Excuse me. Recently, you got a prestigious award in Calvert. Can you share that information with us, from the Catholic Church in Calvert?

Irvin Beverly ([43:15](#)):

Yes. I can't even remember what it was.

Ilene Beverly ([43:17](#)):

The Catholic Church?

Irvin Beverly ([43:22](#)):

Yeah. It's been... God, I can't remember. That's how important it was to me, I can't even remember.

Ilene Beverly ([43:26](#)):

It was a nice banquet.

Irvin Beverly ([43:28](#)):

Yeah, they had a banquet for me. Yeah, as being one of the oldest members there and the service that I had been able to provide all of these years, the Catholic Church gave me a certificate of, I don't even know, what is it called?

Ilene Beverly ([43:46](#)):

A plaque?

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([43:46](#)):

A plaque, a plaque.

Ilene Beverly ([43:49](#)):

It was a plaque.

Irvin Beverly ([43:50](#)):

Yeah, they gave me a plaque of being one of the people that was important to the community, to SMILE, amen, and had a banquet to honor me, and that's unbelievable.

Alma Jordon ([44:05](#)):

And you were the first non-Catholic recipient.

Irvin Beverly ([44:08](#)):

Yes, actually. The Catholic Church, they had first non-Catholic recipient of an award from the Catholic Church only because of the things that I've done at SMILE, through MILE, for the community and how the people in the community, Catholic and all has respected me even though I'm United Methodist, had respected me in what I do as though I was Catholic, with no negativity other than the fact that God had used me in the community to be a servant to all. And that's very special to me.

Alma Jordon ([44:52](#)):

So, what are the final words you would like to leave with us on this interview that has been so very interesting?

Irvin Beverly ([45:00](#)):

Oh, if I could just remember everything. Like I said, again, we're talking about a time, 30-some years of people's names, and you're still being respected. Even right now I'm saying to them, because right now there are many of the clients that come in to SMILE who were children, when I was still taking care of them and taking care of their electric bills and all of these things.

([45:25](#)):

And now, at this age, they still know me only for that purpose, the reason that I respect them and they respect me. And I just thank God that He has used me in this position and moved me here to St. Mary's County for 25 years. And some people who are here and come here probably have never even heard of SMILE or know that what I do and how long I've been doing it has been just a part of my life.

([45:57](#)):

And I try to live every day, really, every day, and see people as who they are and for what God has called them to need, and put me in a position where I've been able to do whatever it is without judging them or not judging their parent. And so, their parent has said to them, have they have learned through knowing SMILE who I am and what I do, and still, to this very day, come and respect me.

([46:32](#)):

I went into SMILE yesterday. And I started backing off a little bit of what I do, transferring what I do to some of the younger people, and they're moving. But like I say, I'm still the only one, still got a parking lot, a parking space there. But I was going... A young lady, I'm sharing... called, and Ilene, I was telling you, what's her name?

Ilene Beverly ([46:58](#)):

The one that you-

Irvin Beverly ([46:58](#)):

Mm-hmm.

Ilene Beverly ([46:58](#)):

... called?

Irvin Beverly ([47:02](#)):

Yeah, she needed help, and she had gone to SMILE to get help, and they had told her to call me, and I called SMILE and told them she went there yesterday because it was a weekend, they were going to cut up power off Monday, yeah, Monday.

([47:17](#)):

And I told her to go, this was mid last Friday, to be there early Monday morning. And Ilene agreed to be there early Monday morning and go and register, and then tell them that I had sent her. And I couldn't remember, but yesterday they told her to come back Monday when she registered, to come back Thursday and someone there would make sure the bill was paid.

([47:43](#)):

And I went into SMILE yesterday, and it was opening, and there was a line of people who were in line to go into SMILE. And this lady, young girl was sitting in a chair when I went through, and she grabbed me by my coat and said... She called me Mr. Beverly. She didn't call me Reverend or Pastor.

([48:07](#)):

And she said who she was, and then start thanking me for being able to help her with her... She's invalid. She was actually an invalid, really, in many ways. But to grab me and stop me when I didn't even know who she was, but she knew who I was, and to thank me in the midst of all of these people that's standing in the line while she's sitting down.

([48:38](#)):

She was crippled. And just to thank me for what I had just done for her. And I thought to myself, "God is good. Even these people that's been being blessed that I don't even know, but God has let them know me so that I can walk through a crowd and they reach over and grab you and thank you."

Alma Jordon ([48:57](#)):

That is so wonderful.

Irvin Beverly ([48:57](#)):

To thank you-

Alma Jordon ([48:57](#)):

That is so wonderful.

Irvin Beverly ([49:04](#)):

... for what you have done without even knowing her. I know of her family, but I actually didn't know her, but she knew me. How, I don't know. That is my message. I just want to be able to walk through the community, amen, and just be known as someone that God has used, not only in [inaudible 00:49:27] County, but for 25 years over here.

(49:31):

The same difference of people that know me, I don't know these people, but they know Bethesda Church, and they're part of Bethesda Church, and they know I'm the pastor here. And that's all I want to be able to say, that when I leave here, wherever they stretch me, I leave at whatever age I am, if somebody can say something kind about who I am and what I have done-

Alma Jordon (50:07):

Yes.

Irvin Beverly (50:07):

... without me having to tell folk who I am. I just, even today, you all have just shocked me with the fact that I am here not knowing why I was going to be here, and I'm not even dressed for it. I didn't think, amen... And you should have seen me what I was going to look like if I hadn't... Suddenly, Ilene said, "Stop." Amen.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr (50:36):

Amen.

Alma Jordon (50:38):

Well, thank you so much for that, for that very interesting-

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr (50:42):

Yes.

Alma Jordon (50:43):

... very interesting life story. I just wondered if anybody else here had any questions or anything to share. His wife, sister, Ilene Beverly, did you have anything? One of our deacons, Nathaniel Lawrence, Brother Nathaniel Lawrence?

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr (51:07):

Pastor, I always remember when you and your first wife-

Irvin Beverly (51:08):

Yeah.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr (51:09):

... you visited us before you became pastor.

Irvin Beverly ([51:11](#)):

Yeah.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([51:11](#)):

And I remember when I had to be here for one [inaudible 00:51:14]-

Irvin Beverly ([51:11](#)):

Yeah.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([51:13](#)):

... before you became pastor here.

Irvin Beverly ([51:15](#)):

Yeah.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([51:23](#)):

And that's when we all got familiar with you. And that's when we made the decision to-

Irvin Beverly ([51:25](#)):

Amen.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([51:32](#)):

... we definitely wanted Pastor back. At that time, you were Reverend Beverly, like you said.

Irvin Beverly ([51:34](#)):

Yeah.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([51:35](#)):

And that's why we just loved you ever since.

Irvin Beverly ([51:37](#)):

Amen.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([51:41](#)):

And from, of course, July 1 of the year of 2000 is when you were appointed as pastor of Bethesda.

Alma Jordon ([51:49](#)):

Yes.

Irvin Beverly ([51:50](#)):

Yeah.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([51:51](#)):

And that's been 25 years. It will be 25 years on July coming.

Irvin Beverly ([51:55](#)):

Wow.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([51:55](#)):

So, we were blessed thoroughly-

Irvin Beverly ([51:59](#)):

Thank you, my brother.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([52:00](#)):

... by you-

Irvin Beverly ([52:01](#)):

Thank you.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([52:01](#)):

... and all that you do for Bethesda.

Irvin Beverly ([52:04](#)):

Thank you, thank you so much.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([52:05](#)):

We thank you so much.

Irvin Beverly ([52:06](#)):

Thank you.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([52:08](#)):

And we love you, Pastor.

Irvin Beverly ([52:10](#)):

I love you all, I love being here, I love, I just love the Lord, and He has blessed me, amen, amen

Alma Jordon ([52:19](#)):

Merideth Taylor, did you have any questions? Merideth is one of our partners at UCAC.

Merideth Taylor ([52:30](#)):

No, I'm very glad I was here. Thank you for what you shared.

Irvin Beverly ([52:31](#)):

Thank you for staying. Let me share one more, one last thing. This doesn't have to be on the... Because of being here and being Alma's and all of her family's pastor here, her mother adopted me as one of her children.

([52:52](#)):

And one Christmas, a few years before she passed, when all of the families were sitting around the Christmas table, she told them she had an announcement, her mother did. And she announced that from that day on, I was one of her sons, and that each one of them should treat me like I was their brother. Amen.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([53:14](#)):

Amen.

Irvin Beverly ([53:16](#)):

And I became, what's your last name?

Alma Jordon ([53:20](#)):

Jordon, Alma Jordon. Alma Thompson Jordon.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([53:24](#)):

Mrs. Thompson.

Irvin Beverly ([53:24](#)):

Mrs. Thompson said to all of her Thompson sons, "This is your brother." And from that day, God knows, this is the truth, from that day, each one of them, to this very day, respect me as a brother. So, I am a Beverly Thompson. Amen.

Alma Jordon ([53:48](#)):

Amen.

Nathaniel Lawrence Sr ([53:48](#)):

Amen.