



Rev. Price M. Collins (1907-1999)

One Pilgrim's Pathway

Remembrances of Rev. Price Collins

by Rev. Price M. Collins (1974)

Editor's Note: Rev. Price MacMillan Collins (1907-1999) was a clergy member of the Philadelphia Conference of the Methodist Church and, after the 1968 merger, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, in which he served as pastor, district superintendent and administrator. This article was first given as a paper in December 1974 before the Phi Beta Clergy Club, a group founded in 1907, which continues today. The editor is grateful to Rev. Collins' son, Price Morse Collins, for supplying the text and several images.

My earliest memory was walking with my grandfather when I was three to see ducks in a small stream behind his home in Bustleton, Philadelphia. Grandfather William MacMillan was a carpenter and builder. Mother told me her father had reconstructed the spire of the Methodist Church just across Bustleton Avenue from their home. The Bustleton Church was a landmark in the town until destroyed by fire in 1944. One of our colleagues toiled to bring the new edifice into being, Rev. Lew Walley.¹ Grandfather died within a year, but I recall him as a very tall, kindly man with a big mustache. Our home was in Logan and trips to Bustleton were major events then, because the two were eleven miles apart and transportation could require train, trolley, horse and carriage or a three-mile walk from Fox Chase to Bustleton.

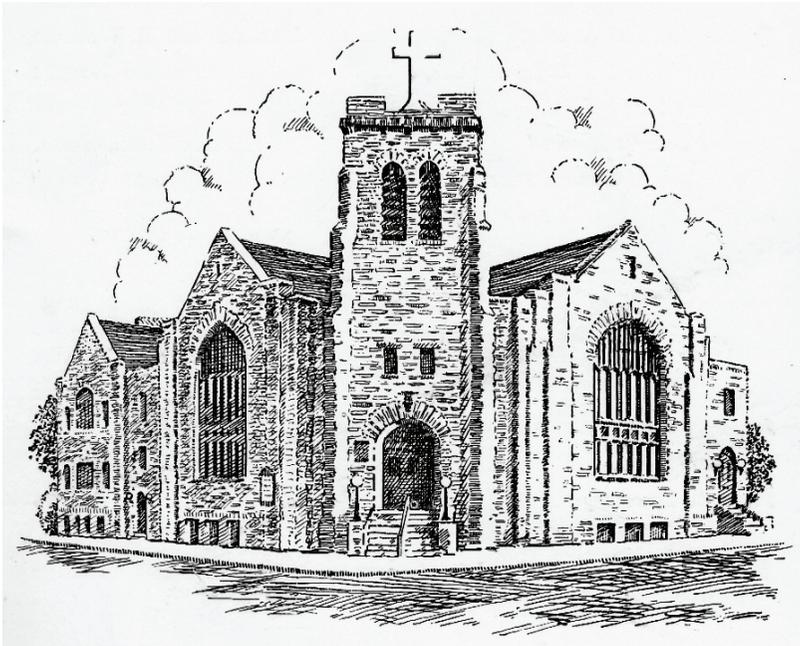
Logan was then a scattered, haphazardly populated community. Our family had arrived from Cheltenham in 1906, before I arrived on the

¹Methodism in the Bustleton section of Philadelphia began with the formation of a society in 1833. A church built in 1868 burned down in 1944; a new building was erected and dedicated in 1947 under the leadership of Rev. F. Lewis Walley (1910-1999). See Harold Koch, *The Leaven of the Kingdom* ([Ephrata: Science Press, 1983]), 17. Bustleton Church closed in 2010, and its Bustleton Avenue property was sold in 2011.

scene. The family had enjoyed Cheltenham. I often heard Mother speak of the friends they had made there. My father, Nicolas Price Collins, must have had one somewhat different acquaintance. Our oldest sister, Anna, was not very well during this period and Mother and Dad were concerned for her health. One summer evening they suddenly heard her scream. Dad ran upstairs to her darkened room to see a neighboring cat silhouetted in the window sill. Upset by this sight that had apparently terrorized Anna, he went to his room, came back with a pistol and “blazed away” at the cat who was probably as frightened as Anna. The cat disappeared, but the results of the incident lasted. Mr. Charles Conklin, the landlord, declared that if the Collinses “couldn’t accept his cats, they could not live in his house.” The family emigrated shortly thereafter to Logan whence I arrived the following year. Years later, as a District Superintendent on the North District, I was scheduled to conduct a Quarterly Conference in Cheltenham, where the cat incident occurred. I looked at the Roll, discovering a Charles Conklin on the register. I wondered what would happen when Charles Conklin, Lay Leader, would see Price Collins back in Cheltenham. The evening, however, was most pleasant and I came to appreciate this fine Methodist layman as a Christian friend. We were both of the next generation.

It is about time that this epistle revealed some direction and purpose. I have often heard troubled people ask, “Why did God do this to me?” In a sense this same question comes to mind here, not in troubled despair, but in appreciation for God’s guidance many years later. I recall often having heard Christians witness to God’s direction in their lives. I was usually reluctant to select or share such experiences, but as I look back now to the earlier years, incidents that did not appear related to spiritual growth at the time must have had a significant place in my life. I speak particularly of experiences within our family that remain with me. These memories are probably more clearly outlined in my mind because of my brother’s death last spring. I began to realize that thoughts once shared by six of our family are in my memory alone. What I hope to share is a biography of the spirit, recording those experiences that must have influenced the formative and decisive years.

We were a happy and expressive family. Mother gave warmth and informal grace to our home. Father read and shared his thoughts with us. Every evening after supper (not dinner) Dad would read the paper and the family listened. It was our only news source, and the paper then was *The North American*, a Philadelphia evening “sheet” long since departed. The life of our family was strongly centered in the church.



Logan Methodist Church, which the Collins family helped to found.

Logan Methodist Church was organized in 1908, and the first Presiding Elder to assist in forming the congregation was Dr. Jabez Bickerton.² There were two sizable families involved, the Barnes family and the Collinses, each had a total of six. When Paul Collins went down with scarlet fever for a time, the Sunday school came temporarily to a halt. Services were first held in the Greenpoint Building at Lindley and Windrim Avenues until a property at 13th and Rockland Streets was available for the new church. The new congregation was brought into being as Bishop Foss Methodist Church. It was later changed to Logan Church, the reason given that the church had expected the family of

²Logan Church grew out of cottage prayer meetings led by Rev. Henry Hess. In December 1908, a first service was led by Dr. Jabez G. Bickerton (1856-1941), a former Presiding Elder, who was then leading the Church Extension Society, and District Superintendent (the name had just been changed that year from Presiding Elder) John G. Wilson; in attendance were 32 persons, including the Collins family. A house at the corner of Thirteenth and Rockland Streets was remodeled for use as a church, and dedicated in June 1909 by retired Bishop Cyrus D. Foss. A stone church was erected on the same site, and dedicated April 15, 1917 by Bishop Thomas B. Neely; *Logan Methodist Church, 1908-1958* (Anniversary Booklet, 1958), 7-16. Logan Church closed in 1979.

Bishop Foss to help support the young congregation. This was not forthcoming and the name was changed to Logan Church.

The first pastor of the church was James J. Bingham, a young, enthusiastic man whom the Collins family found an inspiration as a pastor and preacher. I remember his long black coat. He knelt beside the pulpit on a stool to pray. He was a cheerful, vigorous man – a positive influence for a new congregation. The preacher was always welcome in our home and his visits were considered exciting events.³

I remember family worship in our home. Father read the Bible and then we would kneel to pray. As a very small boy, I can remember getting so restless that I got up and walked between the feet and legs while the rest were still praying. These prayers seemed awfully long events at first, but later I came to appreciate their place in my life as we grew and the family members left. Our individual participation further bound us together.

Growing up as the youngest member of a sizeable family had both advantages and drawbacks. I suspect my brother Paul took some raps from my older sisters that he didn't deserve when they thought the youngest was getting "picked on." I got along fairly well with Anna and Mary, and Paul was both friend and brother. Dad and Mother did not spare discipline when absolutely essential, though it occurred extremely seldom. Later my Aunt Katie, who as fate would have it, taught school in Philadelphia where Ella was also assigned, advised her I had been a "holy terror." I was rather surprised first about the "holy" part and actually, I never thought she noticed me enough to remember what I was like.

My sister Mary, anxious to start the youngest out well, urged my mother to have me start school early. I did, but the older kids scared me, and that experience was a disaster. There are not many kids who flunked first grade, but I did. I started out again at six, with no great problems.

The next year an unfortunate accident stopped everything. On Halloween morning I told my mother I wanted to dress up like the devil that night. I went out to play with three friends, and two of us got in a

³Rev. James J. Bingham (1876-1964) was raised in the Arch Street Methodist Episcopal Church, where he came to faith in Christ at nine through the ministry of Rev. Andrew Longacre. Bingham was ordained a deacon in the Philadelphia Conference in 1909, and an elder in 1911. Logan ME Church was his first pastorate, and while there, in 1912, he married his wife Gertrude; the couple had two daughters. During World War I, Bingham served overseas as a chaplain with the YMCA and with the Sixth Marine Regiment. His last pastoral charge in retirement was the Quakertown (Bucks County) Methodist Church, from 1949 to 1962. *Philadelphia Conference Minutes* (1964), 272-273.

A photo from 1908 showing Price Collins in the arms of his mother Sallie; sitting on the left is sister Mary, to the right Anna, and standing is Paul.



crate. The crate was placed on a wagon. We were supposed to roar and imitate raging lions. The crate fell off. I ended up with a broken arm and shoulder. The doctor looked me over and said, "Well you got your wish for Halloween. You sure look like the devil now." It was a "tough break" in more ways than one. I lost school, surgery was necessary twice and the family could ill afford it, I'm sure. My Dad and Mother both worried about this, but I never will forget Mother's hospital visits. The children's ward at St. Luke's Hospital was quarantined for scarlet fever during my stay. Mother would peek through the door, and I still remember her loving expression. This will never leave my memory.

My brother and sisters, like Dad and Mother, were bright people. Their school records were good. I had too much example! School was a changing scene to me. I liked history and detested and feared arithmetic. I didn't need "an apple a day;" just a few examples on the board and my hand went up, not to solve a problem, but to leave the room! Generally my records for deportment were good but I remember one instance where after having been needled quietly by a "friend," I returned one of his paper wad missiles, known as a "spit ball," quite openly. The teacher sent me to the office. Miss Eisler, the principal, had nose-pincher glasses.

She put them on and dramatically gazed upon you with a look that could freeze a small boy. Miss Eisler said I was a shocking example of a boy who had fine parents, brother and sisters. I was punished by writing, "I must not throw spit balls," several hundred times. Once was enough; after that the principal and I stayed strictly and safely apart.

James Bingham was moved to another conference appointment in 1914. I can't remember that, but I do remember my father coming home from work one evening, reading his paper as he walked. Dad had a hard job; the hours were from seven in the morning and till nearly six in the evening. He walked three to four miles each way. He must have been tired, but he was still reading as he approached our house. He told us war had been declared in Europe. The war divided neighbors. There were a number of German mechanics in our area, and as American sympathies moved toward Britain and France, there was considerable feeling in our immediate neighborhood. Youngsters dug trenches and pelted one another with rocks.

A new pastor was assigned to Logan, an older man, Richard Turner. As a boy, I recall Rev. Richard Turner's way of speaking. His mouth sort of popped open, and an unusual sound was emitted before the first word was heard.⁴ I used to listen, fascinated at this, and would try to imitate him. I recall only one comment from him in ascribing the blame among the warring nations. England says "it's not in me," Germany says "it's not in me." It all seems so tragically repetitious now, as we think of the cycle of hysteria stimulated by war after war, frenzied actions to mobilize the nation to participate in legal barbarism. We've had a total of four such experiences since we endeavored to "make the world safe for democracy."

The war dragged on, and in 1917 my father took a job at the Baldwin Locomotive Works on a contract they had producing British munitions.⁵ It was hard and miserable work, and an unpleasant task, in order to feed a family of six. In 1917, America entered the war and our

⁴Rev. Richard Turner (1844-1921), a native of England, had begun his ministry with the Primitive Methodist Church in 1864. He was remembered as a "sympathetic, faithful and beloved pastor... [who] proclaimed the inspired and eternal Truth with clearness, power and success." *Philadelphia Conference Minutes* (1922), 384-385.

⁵An historical marker at the intersection of 19th and Hamilton Streets indicates the location of the Baldwin Locomotive Works from 1835 to 1928, now Matthias Baldwin Park. For years the nation's leading manufacturer of locomotives, Baldwin's boasted a complex of 39 buildings covering 17 acres at this site, employing 15,000 workers. The company moved to Eddystone in 1928, and ceased production in 1956.



Two early pastors of Logan Church, who influenced Rev. Collins:
left: Rev. James J. Bingham; right; Rev. Harry A. Relyea.

own men faced the tragedy of foreign conflict. We, as a family, were not involved in it directly, but in 1918 at the end of the war, the country faced a terrible foe at home. The “flu” devastated our people.⁶ Our family was involved. My mother was terribly ill, but survived. Anna did not.

She was just entering Normal School, a beautiful girl to me, bright and full of a joyous spirit. Anna died, and our family felt deeply her loss. I remember one incident the morning of her death. It was a bright fall day and I had walked outside to speak to a boyhood friend, Ben. He wanted to express his sympathy and said “It’s too bad about Anna; she was the best looking one of the bunch.” The family was fond of Ben and I went in and shared his comment. It was the one light moment of that day. I knew that my family would understand Ben’s intention, and besides he was right! Dad and Mother tried to face Anna’s death courageously. They were not given to outward expressions of grief, but I noticed that when Dad returned from work in the evening, he and Mother would hold one another. I knew their loss was deeply felt.

⁶In late 1918, just as the war was ending, a devastating influenza epidemic struck the United States; more than 600,000 Americans died from the scourge, which is estimated to have killed 50 million worldwide; 16 million people died in World War I.

Rev. Harry Relyea was a strong servant for God. He brought to Logan Church a brilliant new spirit. He had a good mind; he was an excellent preacher and touched a congregation now in a new church.⁷ We loved the new edifice and all it represented in the congregation's growth. The Akron plan was then considered a very forward step in architecture. This church did touch lives. It was a church-going generation, and over 1,000 persons were joyously involved. Youth were recognized and they responded. Mr. Relyea urged people to commit the whole of life. This included tithing, and our family said "yes." I signed a card and put 10% aside each Saturday. We had been told that God would bless us if we did so. I was puzzled, however, because my resources were dropping steadily. It was not until I told Mother I was losing money that I found that one did not tithe the principal each Saturday, just the new income. It was just another instance of my lack of acquaintance with mathematics; it still was haunting me.

When I was 12, I accepted the call to consider Christ and his church as the commitment of my life. I remember this as a decision more than as an experience. Dr. William H. Ford received a group of us into membership the following spring, I believe at the age of thirteen.⁸ Scouting came to Logan Church. Certain Veterans of "the Great War" (as it was then called) showed interest in the scouting program, and in 1920, Troop 70 was assigned to the Methodist Church. There were several scouting units formed in the area and the program was popular with youngsters in the community. It was at first rather militarily centered, as an echo of the war. Drilling and other army patterns made up a considerable part of the program, and interest waned. A young couple came to the church early in Dr. Ford's ministry, in about 1922. Bob and Helen Moore united with Logan Church and, noting his interest in scouting, another youngster and I asked him to take the troop; he said yes, and I know his life for the next 40 years was altered. Bob Moore,

⁷Rev. Harry A. Relyea (1890-1947) was a graduate of Columbia University and Drew Seminary, and served churches in the New Jersey, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Newark, and Wyoming Conferences. After falling ill with cancer, he submitted to new, experimental radiation treatments in 1945, which garnered national press attention. *Wyoming Conference Minutes* (1948), 1014-1015.

⁸Rev. William H. Ford (1869-1962) was born in Philadelphia and studied at the Pennington School and Dickinson College. Ordained in 1894, he served as a pastor, chaplain and trustee of Philadelphia's Methodist Hospital, and as Superintendent of the Northwest District, 1925-1931. Price Collins spoke at Ford's funeral service, held in Philadelphia's Mount Airy Church. *Philadelphia Conference Minutes* (1963), 1196-1197.

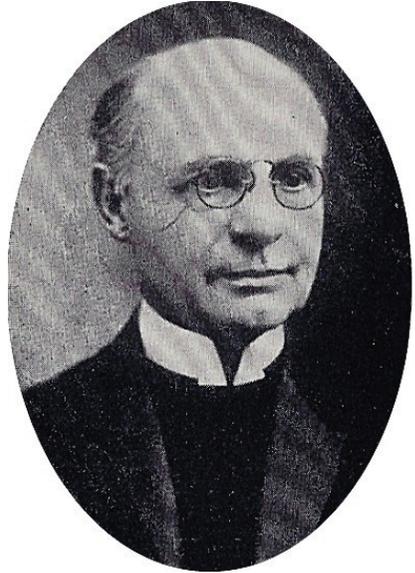
also a young veteran, took a generation of youngsters and gave himself to them. Helen accepted the role of a scoutmaster's widow. From this commitment to youth, came a response through the lives of scores of boys who grew in character, loved the outdoors, and found an incentive to serve God, their land and help others.

I can remember a variety of evangelistic efforts through these years that stirred the youth of our church. The calls to repentance were clear and at times dramatic. I was moved by these stirring challenges. Often the evangelist would see the group of young people. There was a section where youth generally sat in the church, and we would usually respond. I remember going forward a number of times for these altar calls. As I recall, we thought it would help the cause so we went forward and knelt. It wasn't cynical; and I still feel that persons who claim such experiences moved them away from the church were seeking an excuse for their unwillingness to relate to Christ. These periodic evangelistic meetings were good for the church, though, as in all such intense efforts, there certainly were varied responses. During all these years, however, I believe I was more moved and led into spiritual growth by the continued impact of preaching, the church life as a whole, and our family circle.

In 1923 my father died. He was ill only four days with pneumonia. His death was a great loss to me. Dad and I had spent a year together very closely. We were drawn together by the new excitement of that time: building radios together. My brother was in college, and this new companionship with Dad was a joy. Father was really scholarly and artistic, and had a keen mind. His attainments were limited by his responsibilities to each of us. He was suddenly gone. Bob Moore, the scoutmaster, must have sensed it and his friendship was strength for me.

Scouting took a great deal of my time. I managed to rub two sticks together at the right time and I received an Eagle Scout Badge with a few others. These were exciting years. Vocal music became another privilege through our choir, and a few of us became members of the Mendelssohn Club. I shall never forget Leopold Stokowski's long fingers as he led our club and the Philadelphia Orchestra.⁹ I must say I

⁹Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977) was conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, 1912-1940. A "flamboyant, pioneering genius," Stokowski pioneered orchestral broadcasting and recording; his trademark was conducting with his hands, eschewing the traditional baton. His successor was Eugene Ormandy. See "Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977)," in *Music Educators Journal*, 64:7 (March, 1978), 62-63; and Janet Frank, "Classical Music: When Maestros Were Maestros; Innovator, Mentor, Tyrant, Leopold Stokowski Brought Real Joy to Music Making," in *The American Scholar* 76:1 (Winter 2007), 130-133.



Left: Leopold Stokowski, under whom Collins studied music.
 Right: Rev. G. Bickley Burns, pastor of Logan Church, 1925-1933.

got more from this experience than I believe I contributed! I graduated from High School much to the relief of my trigonometry teacher. We were both happy to call it quits.

About this time, my sister Mary, now teaching in the Philadelphia school system, after much personal soul-searching, accepted a call to serve with the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of our Methodist Church.¹⁰ She went for her physical examination in New York and was turned down, an obvious heart murmur the cause. I had gone with her for the exam and knew her keen disappointment. After some months she took another examination and was approved. She left in 1928 for Japan, as a teacher of Bible, Physical Education and English. The task in North Japan was hard, but most fulfilling.

¹⁰Mary D. Collins (1900-1949) dreamt of being a missionary since childhood, since, as she put it, "the message of Jesus Christ is the greatest thing in the world." Despite doctor's warnings that her frail health was unsuited to such a life, she persisted until accepted by the WFMS in 1928. She served in Japan for ten years, first in the port city of Hakodate, and later in Tokyo, until failing health compelled her to return to the United States. "Collins, Mary," Mission Biographical Reference Files Collection, United Methodist Church Archives - GCAH, Madison, New Jersey.

Scouting was still much a part of my life. I was employed in electrical and chemical lab work. Music was a fulfillment, as was an interest in the Epworth League. There were both sexes in our church, just like any other congregation, and I was very much aware that girls existed; but winter weekend camping trips may have taken some of my time and limited my concentration in their direction.

At this time, G. Bickley Burns was the minister of Logan Church. He was a gentleman, a scholar and a theologian. He was more convincing to me than exciting, and a person of influence on my faith. There was in our church, at this time, another influence to be felt. The word “fundamentalist” had emerged. There were among them honest conservatives who were deeply convinced about “modernism.” To a young church member these people presented matters worth attention. This group was concerned about Biblical inspirations and the “Second coming of Christ.” We listened to people talking about premillennial and postmillennial interpretations. Calvin and Arminius were both in there “pitching” as well. The Bible was examined, not just for the message, but on the basis of how one interprets The Book. How does one define “the inspired word?”

One capable businessman, Harry Jaeger, taught a class of young men in the Sunday school. He had a following that was growing. I was naturally impressed by this group. Their handbook was not just the Bible, it was the Schofield Bible. The inspiration was scriptural text, plus Dr. Schofield’s notes; after all weren’t they in the Bible?! Yes, I was impressed, but over against this exciting array were some very strong, though less strident voices, namely my mother, who really knew her Bible, and whose Methodist precepts of salvation and freedom of will through Father Wesley were not to be denied. Our wise spiritual mentor, Dr. G. Bickley Burns, I now think, had been called to the kingdom “for such a time as this;”¹¹ and my good scouting friend, Bob

¹¹Rev. George Bickley Burns (1861-1935) was from a ministerial dynasty which gave more than a dozen men to ordained ministry, including two bishops, his brother Charles Wesley Burns, and a cousin, George H. Bickley, Jr. Bickley came to faith in the Hatboro Church in 1876, and joined the Philadelphia Conference in 1883. His appointment to Logan in 1925 followed 9 years as a District Superintendent. Recalled as a “friend and spiritual father to thousands,” it was said that “as a shepherd, administrator and preacher he excelled, and many there be who are finding it hard to get on without him.” *Philadelphia Conference Minutes* (1936), 809-810. His daughter Elizabeth married Rev. Charles D. Brodhead (1894-1981); their sons also became ministers in the Philadelphia Conference: B. Burns Brodhead (1921-2012) and C. Daniel Brodhead (1929-2009).

Moore, also was within my area of consideration. I remember comparing the religion of the “fundamentalist” with the words of Bob Moore: “Price, no matter what you believe, if you don’t include love, the rest doesn’t mean much.” Later on, my sister writing from Japan said, “As I read your letters, I was afraid you were very much influenced by the literalists.” I suppose my expressions may have contained stereotyped expressions that had become associated with certain religious groups.

I had always admired our ministers, as men engaged in a very high calling. I regarded my sister Mary’s answer to a call for life service very highly. I looked upon these persons as very able, as well as very consecrated people. I also had a feeling that acceptance of such a call required of one a level of ability that was possessed by very few Christians. I remembered three of our own pastors as persons whom I so regarded: James Bingham, Harry Relyea and Bickley Burns. To be a part of such a group seemed out of the question. However, one Sunday evening a young man whom I knew, returned from seminary to preach at our church. I remember where I was sitting, and as I listened I suddenly was struck with the fact that this young man was not as equipped as I had pictured the group of men I had put on such a pedestal. I listened for a word of witness, a spiritual message, knowledge, interest or power, I couldn’t find it. Actually, I thought, “If God has to use him, I should be a minister.” I considered it for several months, still dubious as to my ability to serve acceptably. I spoke to several friends and finally Dr. Bickley Burns before deciding to answer “Yes” to a hard question. My scouting friend and employer, Bob Moore, was not too encouraging; his comment was, “You can do it, but your Irish temper won’t help! Your congregations will probably be contentious.” I always tried to remember that advice!

Preparation was not easy. It probably never has been for most of us. Our family was now quite changed. Mother and I were the only ones still at home. College away from Philadelphia seemed impossible economically. I matriculated at Temple, working from 7:30 to 4:15 in a mill. I was in charge of 25 weavers for eight hours. At 4:30 I arrived at Temple and stayed then till 10 PM. I was scheduled in a full degree program in the school of education. I did this for three years, living on faith, soup, sandwiches and Bisodol. I remember a course in Hebrew grammar in which my mind went blank. I prayed a short and rather demanding prayer: “Lord, you got me into this, you’ve got to get me through it.” He did; after placing the responsibility on God, I relaxed, my memory returned, and the answers came. There are others here who

enjoyed a somewhat similar routine. Before the end of this episode, the pressure of work, combined with atmospheric conditions in the textile mill, required two nose and throat operations.

I remember a conference in Allentown, March 1936. I received my first student appointment. I followed George Perkins at Collingdale.¹² George appeared to me smooth, assured and altogether at ease. We traveled back from Allentown on the trolley, and that trip didn't help my ego. George appeared to me as a finished speaker, impeccably dressed. He advised me he had a morning coat. I had one too; it was for morning, evening and everything else.

Collingdale was not an easy task, but I found my fears had been exaggerated. Methodist people are long-suffering, understanding and loving. Probably everyone recalls this first preaching experience with unforgettable memories. Mother often accompanied me to Collingdale and her presence was a blessing. These people and the community were generous and patient, and even their children taught me lessons I shall not forget. I remember a children's sermon I gave as an object lesson. I chose an English walnut and a small stone of similar appearance. We compared the nut and the stone, considering the valued qualities of the walnut as food and for planting. Then I said, "You boys and girls don't want to be stones, do you?" Their answer: "No, but we don't want to be nuts either!"

I had been appointed to Collingdale in March. I was taking a course in English Bible that provided me with some Biblical material for preaching from week to week. When the spring semester ended, my sermon supply was depleted. I remember one Sunday in July, reaching a point in preaching where I felt I had little more to say. I ended the sermon and service somehow and went home, and that night I was troubled. I was committed to the ministry but unhappy with my preaching. College was not a problem; I was doing well and liked my studies. But my message was the question. Finally it came to me: you are

¹²The congregation began in 1924 as the Central Methodist Episcopal Church of Collingdale and Aldan, Delaware County. A building was erected in 1925, and a brick church built in 1948-1949, at which time the name Mariner's Bethel was adopted, to acknowledge a gift of funds received from the sale of a South Philadelphia church of that name which dated to 1831. See Koch, 15, 97. The Collingdale church closed in 2010, and its building is now the home of the Golden Gate Christian Assembly. Rev. George W. Perkins (1910-1972) began his ministry in the Conference in 1928 in Coatesville; he served many years as a chaplain at the Methodist Hospital and the Memorial Hospital of Roxborough, Philadelphia. *Philadelphia Conference Minutes* (1973), 396.



A photo of leading Philadelphia Conference clergy, taken at the session of 1936, where Price received his first appointment, several of whom he mentions in his narrative. Back row, left to right: Roy N. Keiser, John Watchorn, Charles D. Brodhead, William J. Bawden. Front row: Albert W. Witwer, William D. Ford, Leon T. Moore, Albert S. Morris.

not in the pulpit primarily to inform, but to witness. Tell them what Christ means to you, what God through Christ can do for them. I really feel this experience was my true call to the ministry. I returned and preached with assurance.

My sister had been in North Japan for one term of five years, returned home on a working furlough, and went back again, this time to Tokyo at Aoyama Gakuin, a Methodist girls' school. Mary was a capable teacher, an excellent speaker here at home, and a valued witness for Christ. While on her first term in Hakodate, she had been one of the hosts for Augusta Dickerson, who had returned to Japan to celebrate many years of service as a Methodist educator.¹³ Travelling with her,

¹³Augusta Dickerson (1859-1946) served 37 years as a missionary in Japan. See page 29 for more on her life and ministry.

having taken a leave of absence from college, was Miss Ella Morse. Ella and Mary had known one another in church school training camp, in Pennsylvania, so their visit was a pleasurable one.

On returning to the States, Mother and Ella Morse compared letters from Mary. Ella lived in Olney, not far from our home. I found taking Mother over to see Ella a convenient way to do more than assist them in exchanging letters. This maneuvered friendship that really began three thousand miles from home became the joy of my life. Ella was teaching in Central Philadelphia and often our only opportunity to be together was a brief time at 12th and Spring Garden Streets, after 3:30 and prior to my next class. The spot wasn't a romantic setting, but the place was unimportant. I knew that I loved her and wanted to propose, but how on earth could a student supply preacher have the gall to ask a girl to marry him without any assured job? Getting into the Philadelphia Conference at that time seemed like the rich man getting into heaven.

It had taken me all summer to get up the courage to ask the question. I even remember opening the Bible for guidance. Believe it or not, I opened to the Gospel, and the first words I read were, "Ask and ye shall receive." I was looking for every possible encouragement, and this was a help. At any rate, I knew that I couldn't put it off any longer. I looked for a proper place to ask the question. We went for a walk in Wissahickon Park and I suggested we stop and talk. Ella preferred to keep walking. That day was lost. A few days later I invited Ella to come to a wedding where I was to get five dollars as a soloist. I sang "I Love You Truly," and gazed in her direction. I drove her home and proposed, and the answer was "Yes." Her answer, and the years that have followed are my best memories. Ella is the joy of my life.¹⁴

The Philadelphia Annual Conference in the late thirties was extremely concerned with the credentials of students seeking membership on trial. Although taking full rosters at seminary, some of us were advised that we should attend Drew in conjunction with our own seminary. We drove over one or two days a week to Madison. I appreciated Dr. Edwin Lewis; I observed Dr. Hough's imitative influence

¹⁴Ella Reeves Morse Collins (1910-1990) grew up in the Erie Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, and graduated from Frankford High School and the Philadelphia Normal School. A public school teacher, she was also a member and Sunday school teacher in the St. James ME Church in Olney, Philadelphia. After her marriage to Price, the couple had three children, Price, Virginia and Stephen. Rev. Collins' loving tribute to his wife is found in the *Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Journal* (1991), 7.308-7.309.



Above: Price's sister, Mary Dorothy Collins. Right: Ella Reeves Morse in 1932, who became Mrs. Ella Collins.



on his students, worked under Dr. Hopper and attended Dr. Moffatt's Bible lectures. I was no more of a Methodist than before, but apparently this effort on the part of Temple men impressed the Board of Ministerial Training that we were properly "laundered" for entry.¹⁵

Sister Mary came upon a physical crisis after a blessed decade of service for Christ in Northern Japan and Tokyo. Her heart under stress of unusual effort caused her return from Japan. And the years that followed were ones of illness but never regret. Her loving friends surrounded her with sensitive friendship and Mother's understanding was constant. Occasionally someone would say, "Why did God allow this to happen?" Mary did not question it. She had chosen to go and was grateful for the chance to serve for ten very important years.

I was appointed to Chalfont Church in March 1939. Ella and I planned to be married that summer. The little white meeting house on

¹⁵Price had been attending Temple University's Conwell School of Theology, which had Baptist roots. The school later relocated, and continues today as Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts.

old Route 152 was our choice. Dr. Roy Keiser and Dr. Charles Kitto were the officiating clergy. Dr. Keiser was our District Superintendent, and Dr. Kitto, Ella's pastor, had been my first superintendent. The church was filled, and Ella remembers me as pale green. Dr. Kitto pronounced us "man and wife." We turned to kiss each other, but in some way we had difficulty turning our heads in the proper direction. We both reversed and finally we completed the kiss on the fourth try. By this time the congregation was in an uproar. The Ladies' Aid Society prepared an unforgettable reception which we remember to this day, thirty five years later. We traveled West this year where our children and their families tendered us another joyous occasion in remembrance of Chalfont 1939.¹⁶

The ministry that has followed has been filled with grateful memories. I was ordained as an Elder in 1940 by Bishop Ernest G. Richardson, who placed his hand on my head and in his roughened tone said "Take thou authority to preach the word and administer the sacraments;" and with his hand on Ella's shoulder, "Be thou a faithful helpmate in the ministry." Every appointment has been an individual experience. Congregations would seem to have characteristics that distinguish them, but warmth and understanding were always present.

The Berwyn Church was our first conference appointment.¹⁷ Pleasant memories are still with us from these years. They were a people devoted to God's House and one another. The church debt, though nominal, was burdensome. To get them to think it could be removed was more of a task than the effort to erase it. It was paid off. We planned a celebration to burn the mortgage. The exciting moment came when Mr. Joe Manypenny held the mortgage certificate, Bob Armstrong applied the match, and I held the container for the ashes. Joe waited until it was fully in flame and let it fall into the container in which there was an unknown film of oil. The flame spread and the preacher ran down the

¹⁶The Methodist congregation in Chalfont, Bucks County, was founded in 1897, and initially worshipped in a chapel which it purchased; this was the building Collins knew during his pastorate, 1939-1940. In 1960, the church's present site along Route 202 was purchased, and a new facility erected and dedicated in 1962. See Koch, 86-87.

¹⁷A Methodist society in Berwyn was organized in 1881, and a frame church building erected the same year; this was destroyed by a winter storm in 1883. A stone structure on Main Street, dedicated in 1888, served the congregation through the 1950s, and was sold in 1961. The present property on Waterloo Street was purchased in 1956, whereon a parsonage and educational building were first built; the present sanctuary was erected and dedicated in 1967, under the leadership of Rev. Harold J. Shieck. *Service of Consecration* (Booklet, 1967).



Berwyn Methodist Church, where Price served, 1940-1944. The building was replaced in the 1960s by a new complex on Waterloo Street. The old Main Street church is now the home of the Footlighter's Theater.

aisle with the flaming vessel and threw it out the door. The ceremony was concluded with the Doxology.

Sometime later, Dr. Levi Zerr was appointed Superintendent. Annual Conference was in session and nearly concluded. Appointments were the last item on the agenda. For us it was a peaceful session with no change expected. We were happy at Berwyn. Dr. Zerr telephoned us at 7 AM on the last day and said we were moving to Second Church, Easton. My "faithful helpmate" automatically looked in the minutes and whispered, "The church owes \$65,000!" That was a lot of money in those days. "*How great a flame a little fire kindleth.*"¹⁸ The mortgage burning had not been forgotten. It looked as if we had another similar task.

¹⁸James 3:5. Second Church, Easton began as a mission of First ME Church in 1834, and became a separate charge in 1853. A brick building on Mauch Chunk Street, erected in 1860, was replaced by a stone structure at Berwick and Seitz Streets. This was dedicated in 1926, though the interior was not completed until many years later, no doubt the source of the lingering debt Rev. Collins inherited in 1944. After the 1968 merger of the EUB and Methodist Churches, Christ EUB merged into Second Church, which took the name Christ United Methodist Church, which it retains today, as it continues to worship in its Berwick Street sanctuary; Koch, 41.

We went to Easton, a good church, hard at work on a seemingly everlasting load. Preaching was a joy, and the people responsive, but the debt was an ever-present “millstone.” That congregation deserves a special place in heaven, though I leave that to the Lord. After nearly four years of successful effort on the debt, I felt ill, and went to a heart specialist. About this time Dr. Witwer mentioned an appointment in Philadelphia where a building program was planned. I told my physician how I felt. He knew something of the financial burdens of our church and he said, “You’re not having much fun in this damn town are you?” I was stunned. I never really thought of it. I answered, “I guess not, but how is my heart?” He said, “There’s nothing particularly wrong with you.” I walked out feeling better, and told Dr. Witwer I was willing. We were appointed to Johnson Memorial, in Northeast Philadelphia.

The years ahead were most fulfilling. The Northeast was a new and growing community. Johnson Church was a happy, vibrant young family church. The youth were eager and responsive. Our own children, Price and Virginia were active in the church, and Stephen our newest was just plain active. The experience of seeing a new church edifice erected was an unforgettable joy. Bishop Fred P. Corson consecrated the new sanctuary; it could not be dedicated, since it wasn’t paid for. The tall, spired colonial church is even now a stately symbol in Mayfair.¹⁹ Johnson Memorial was named for Dr. Amos Johnson, a vital preacher in this conference a generation earlier. We *were* able to “dedicate” the structure before an appointment by the Bishop brought the Collins family to Brookline, where Ella said “let’s stay here at least ten years.” It was an altogether happy ministry to a beloved people. We loved the beautiful church and its sensitive congregation. Charles Yrigoyen had been their able and devoted pastor and under his ministry the new gothic sanctuary had been built.²⁰

¹⁹Johnson Memorial Church, in Philadelphia’s Mayfair section, founded in 1930, was named for Rev. Amos Johnson (1849-1927), whose bequest of \$12,000 enabled the purchase of land at Longshore and Hawthorne Streets. A small church dedicated in 1931 was replaced by a brick colonial structure in 1948, under Rev. Collins’ leadership. It was the first new Methodist Church built after World War II in Philadelphia. Koch, 99.

²⁰Brookline, founded in 1916, is today’s Union United Methodist Church of Havertown. A stone church built in 1922 was expanded with a new, adjoining sanctuary in 1949, under the leadership of Rev. Charles Yrigoyen, Sr. (1911-2006). Union traces part of its history to the Union ME Church at 4th and Arch Streets, Philadelphia, founded in 1801 in the building erected for George Whitefield in 1740. Union today has five cornerstones from its various locations, including the one from 1740. Koch, 92-93.



The Methodist Church in Brookline, Delaware County, today's Union United Methodist Church of Havertown, where Price served, 1952-1955.

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Ella never should have wished for a long stay. At the end of three years came one request, then another and a call to visit the Bishop's office. We were appointed to Olivet Church, Coatesville. Olivet was a large church, had a membership of 1,800 persons, and was a preaching center for a church-going community.<sup>21</sup> Preaching to this warm-hearted congregation is an experience one will never forget. Olivet remembers its pastors. A unique custom of this church is "ministers row." Every pastor's picture is placed on the wall when he leaves. Here is beloved Tom McKinney, who ran for mayor, Charles Wesley Burns, later a Bishop; when I left, there had been five of us consecutively whose names commenced with "C.:" Copper, Carter, Cloud, Cathers and Collins. Then the church went to "H," James M. Haney. He had a blessed ministry, and from Coatesville went to Arch Street, Philadelphia.

In 1959 I was appointed as Superintendent of the North District with 84 charges and 105 churches. The district parsonages were all in or near Philadelphia, Obviously much of a superintendent's life was spent at the wheel of his car. Our office was 1701 Arch Street. Mornings and afternoons were generally spent at the office and at committee meetings

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<sup>21</sup>Olivet United Methodist Church dates to 1817; its current sanctuary was built in 1855. Koch, II.

as required. Evenings were for Conferences anywhere from Philadelphia to the Poconos or Carbon County, arriving home before or after midnight. One night I came into the bedroom and mumbled “goodbye.” Ella said, “The word is goodnight. Take off your hat and get that brief case off your bed!” We really enjoyed the Superintendency and especially the fellowship with the pastors and their families.

Starting a new church was probably the most satisfying experience in which I participated while on the District. I want to pay tribute to Mr. Russell Kelly, District Lay Leader, for the contribution he made to this work. He spent most of one summer visiting residents in the Richboro area where we were led to believe that a number of Methodist families resided. He recorded more than four dozen such Methodist homes. They did not all follow their stated inclination, but they did provide the strength to proceed with the church.

I studied the district and discussed the matter with the Bishop and called a young man on the phone asking him if he would be interested in starting a new Methodist Church. Young John Carter agreed to accept the task. I told him he was being appointed to a “cornfield” and he accepted. The first service in a local school was both exciting and a real concern. We did not know what to expect, although we knew we had some supporters. Thirty-three people came to worship, and John and Phyllis Carter from that day have given eagerly of themselves. St. John’s is now a strong United Methodist congregation.<sup>22</sup>

In 1963 I was asked to be the administrator of the Methodist Church Home in Cornwall.<sup>23</sup> Leaving the Superintendency was not easy for me, but Cornwall was important. Levi Zerr had cared for my mother and for many other deserving persons, and I could not easily put the thought aside. I accepted the responsibility. It has been both rewarding and frustrating, an ever-changing task. We have grown, doubling the size of our family, and that has been exciting, but the members of our

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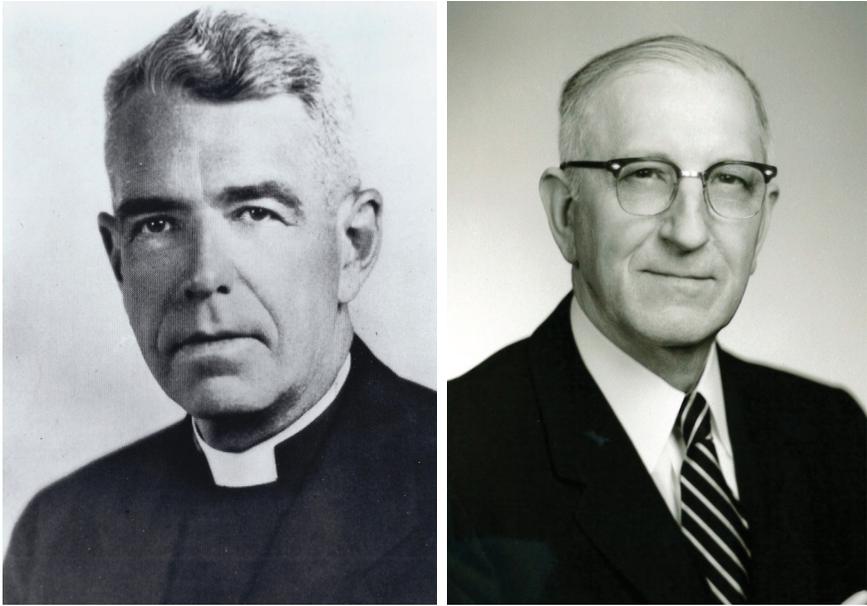
<sup>22</sup>St. John’s United Methodist Church in Ivyland, Bucks County, was founded in 1962, and formally organized by Rev. Collins in January 1963 with 44 charter members. A first building was erected on its Almshouse Road property in 1964, which became the fellowship hall on the completion of the sanctuary in 1971. An education wing was added in 1988. Rev. John S. Carter served St. John’s for 15 years, and at this writing is retired and living in Cornwall Manor. See Koch, 102; and [www.stjohnsivyland.com/about/](http://www.stjohnsivyland.com/about/).

<sup>23</sup>Cornwall Manor is a retirement community in Lebanon County founded in 1949 by Rev. Levi Zerr (1896-1981), who was its first administrator. See J. Dennis Williams, “Cornwall Manor: How It All Started,” in *Annals of Eastern Pennsylvania* 8 (2011), 43-48. Rev. Collins was Cornwall’s second administrator.

“Cornwall family” are the best part of the experience. To know more than three hundred persons, many creatively active, contented in friendships and helping one another, is most satisfying. Seeing ill and aged ones cared for by the church is worth all of one’s effort. Lillian Fowler is nearly 90. There are others in our family who are older but Mrs. Fowler has been our oldest choir singer. She became quite ill in the summer. A small slender lady with a very fragile heart, her condition became quite serious and apparently terminal. Oxygen therapy comforted her, our physicians thought her passing inevitable and just a matter of time. When she was conscious, she too believed life was over. In fact she once rebuked a nurse for disturbing her translated life. But she remained alive and unaccountably, as if by a thread of life, improved slightly. She very slowly regained strength until she now hopes to be back in the choir on Christmas! Every physical diagnosis would have concluded that life for Lillian Fowler was over, except one: her ever living faith. Her existence appears to be the result of a spiritual recovery, strengthened by tender care.

Let’s go back to 1962. The second Vatican Council was convened in Rome by Pope John XXIII. Bishop Corson was then President of the Methodist World Council and was an accredited observer. I recall an occasion very shortly after his return when the Superintendents and their wives were at dinner with the Corsons, and Bishop Corson shared with us something of his unique relationship with Pope John during this unusual council. The Bishop told us of the eagerness and warmth of Pope John’s Christian understanding. To hear that the head of the Roman Catholic Church wanted to open the window to relationships, and was speaking of other communions as a part of the church of Christ was hard to believe. The response of our Protestantism was at least a dubious acceptance. I’ll admit that within me, my own ancestors took to ecumenism very cautiously. I recalled a phrase that had come down through my father’s Scots-Irish forbears, “To Hell with the Pope and the Bishop of Derry.” Some of us had to reconstruct our emotions in keeping with what we knew was our Christian responsibility.

Bishop Corson made open contacts with Archbishop John Krol of Philadelphia and Catholic leaders across our nation. He was accepted as a leader of a new Christian understanding. Slowly but surely, in local communities, Protestants and Catholics were both opening windows and doors to one another. We are the beneficiaries of a new fellowship. I personally believe that we owe much of this new spiritual environment in our national religious life to Bishop Fred Corson. He represented to



Left: Bishop Fred P. Corson, whom Rev. Collins served as a District Superintendent. Right; Dr. Levi Zerr, founder and first administrator of Cornwall Manor, whom Collins succeeded in 1963.

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the American Catholic Church a Protestant leader who saw the need and took steps for Christian brotherhood, and he kept before us the need for outreach as Methodists in our own communities.<sup>24</sup>

In Cornwall for instance, the results of the new perspective have been a blessing to this community and to Cornwall Manor. In the early 1960s there was a hostile climate between the two churches. The Methodists and Catholics had been encouraged to stay spiritually apart, yet they were neighbors. This is gone; now neighbors meet in worship, and now the Catholic youngsters are taught their religious studies at Cornwall Manor. Just prior to our recent 25th Anniversary, one of our Catholic employees burned a candle in Sacred Heart Church to express prayerful concern and affection for Cornwall Manor.

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<sup>24</sup>Bishop Fred P. Corson (1896-1985) was the episcopal leader for Methodists in the Philadelphia area from 1944 to 1968, and was a leader in the ecumenical movement. For a sketch of his life, see Frederick E. Maser, "Bishop Fred Pierce Corson: A Personal Recollection," in *Annals of Eastern Pennsylvania* 1 (2004), 49-59.

During the last few days, one of our young employees stopped in one evening to talk about a prospective hospitalization that will be necessary for her. She is concerned. She is a gracious young Christian. We were talking together about allowing God to help. Her comment was “I don’t care to bother Him about small things.” We each shared with her our thoughts that our Heavenly Father is eager to help with these “small” problems, and that if they are met the “big” ones may not always confront us.

Earlier in this paper I spoke of the importance of “small” things, experiences of daily life as influences upon the spirit. I thank God for a family that lived religion normally and naturally. Sadness, even grief, as well as happiness and health, were a part of life and of God’s love. Mother and Dad loved us, we could depend on them. Therefore it became natural to depend upon our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus.

This has been a somewhat random compendium of God’s guidance in “small” things, and his natural direction through life. He has been exceedingly good. I’m sure I’ve tried his patience many times, but “His merciful kindness is great toward us.” I am grateful for the joy of ministering to God’s people, whether they be children or grownups or those who are full of years. The satisfaction of sharing his love with all of them is our highest joy.

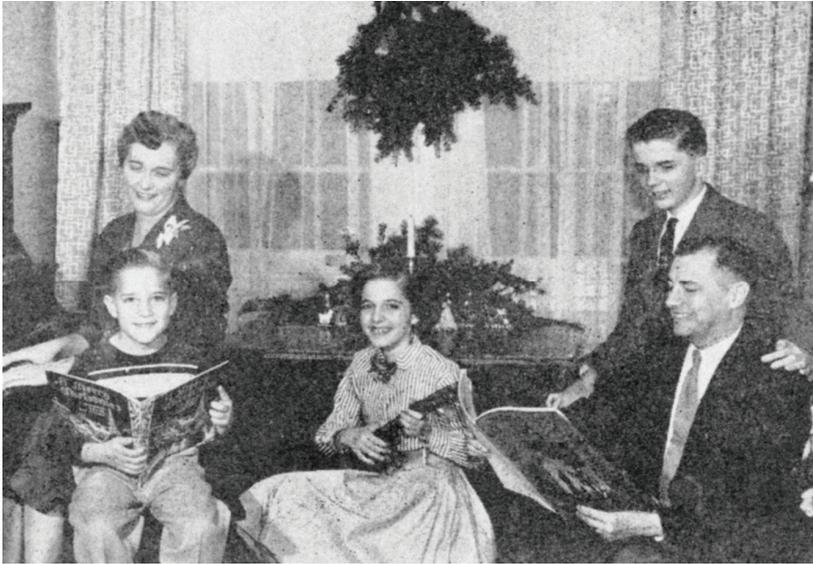
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*Editor’s postscript:* Rev. Collins retired from his post at Cornwall Manor in 1976. For many years, he and Ella worshipped as members of the Cornwall United Methodist Church, and in the 1980s they lived in Roanoake, Virginia in retirement. Rev. Collins died in 1999, and was laid to rest in the Cornwall United Methodist Church Cemetery beside his wife, who predeceased him in 1990. Their son Price Morse Collins, born in 1940, resides today in Cary, North Carolina; their daughter Virginia MacMillan Collins, born in 1943, is in Oakland, California; and son Stephen Reeves Collins, born in 1948, lives in San Francisco.

Rev. Collins’ friend and colleague, Harold Schieck wrote, “Price had a great career in the ministry, serving with distinction the role of pastor for nearly 25 years. He was loved by the people in the churches he served... [and even] as Cornwall Manor Administrator, the depth of his love for the church and its people always supported and guided him.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>*Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Journal* (1999), 7.283.



Above: a photo from a family Christmas card in 1954. Below: the parsonage in Coatesville, where the family lived, 1955-1959. Collins' son Price recalled, "most of the early parsonages were dumps; my mother often recounted that soon after my parents were married in the Chalfont church, the Women's Parsonage Committee made one of their usual nosey visits. In the kitchen, one of them remarked, 'Oh yes, this is where the horse died.'"

