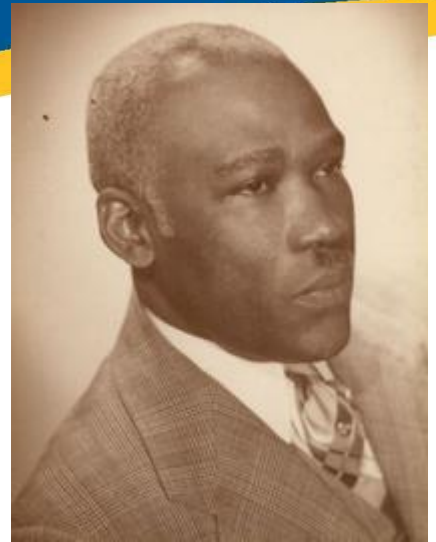


Errold D. Collymore (1892-1972)



Errold D. Collymore D.D.S. (1892-1972), a dentist and activist, who would become known as “Westchester’s Fighting Dentist,” moved to Westchester County in 1926 and integrated the Community Church of White Plains in 1927. When in 1930 the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in front of his new home the Unitarian church members supported him. The incident made national news since it happened up north in the nation’s wealthiest county. Some employers, in an attempt to drive him out of business, told their Africa- American employees they would be fired if they used Collymore. In turn, members of the Community Church left their own dentists and went to him. Although for many years the Collymores were the only African-American family in the White Plains Community Church Collymore went to serve as board member and president of that congregation. From 1952 to 1954 he was a member of the American Unitarian Association Commission Unitarian Intergroup Relations; subsequently he was the first person of color to serve on the AUA Board of Trustees (1954-1957).

In a sermon entitled “A Common Faith by Which to Live” which he delivered at the White Plains Community Church on October 1, 1944 he concluded:

Personally, I want a religion to live by. I want a faith to work by. It is because I have found a conscious effort to find the good life here at the Community Church that I have continued for these sixteen years to work among its people.

Really, now it can be told – you have been the guinea pigs in my laboratory of faith.

Here we have a veritable oasis of faith. Let us continue to build; - let us try to make it grow so that its example in brotherhood and faith in the essential decency of man might spread across the land and usher in the good life even beyond where we can see “far down the futures broadening way.”

Mark D. Morrison-Reed

Other sources:

- “A Faith to Live By,” Errold D. Collymore, *Been in the Storm So Long*, Jacqui James and Mark Morrison-Reed, editors, Skinner House Books, Boston, 1991.
- “The Fighting Dentist,” Lois Ecklund, <<http://www.meadville.edu/unitarian-universalist-sankofa-archive.php>>
- <http://www.jc3.net/ED%20Collymore%20Articles.html>.