

# UCC ROOTS

## *Remembering our History*

---

July 2019

### **A Pastor of Immigrants and an Advocate for Missions**

In 1962, when Ardmore United Church of Christ in Lanham, MD changed its name to St. Paul United Church of Christ, some people joked that it was named after both the Apostle Paul and Paul A. Menzel (1865-1934)—who had been its pastor when the church was established in 1909.

Born in Chicago, Menzel, was the son and stepson of German Evangelical clergy. At the age of 30 he became the pastor of a church in Washington, DC that had been founded in 1833 by a group of German immigrants living in Washington. Known initially as the Concordia German Church, it became the Concordia German Evangelical Church and later the Concordia United Church of Christ.

Many members of the church worked at the German Embassy, and when the church celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1908, Kaiser Wilhelm II gave the congregation a new pulpit Bible. Unfortunately, wars with Germany literally threatened the future of the church. During World War I unnaturalized Germans were prohibited in the District of Columbia.

Concordia Church was not allowed to hold German services and its pastor was viewed with suspicion. In spite of these difficulties, from 1896 to 1919 Menzel remained a strong pastor for an immigrant community under fire.

Menzel was also deeply committed to foreign missions. In 1895 he was elected to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Evangelical Synod of North America. In 1919, he journeyed with a fellow pastor, to Honduras to help establish a German Evangelical mission there, travelling on donkey-back for six weeks. His work dramatically shaped the Evangelical Reformed Church of Honduras, which now has 53 congregations and is affiliated with the United Church of Christ. Soon thereafter the Board of Foreign Missions appointed Menzel to oversee all its foreign mission work.

At his death in 1934 Menzel was remembered as “an exemplary Christian gentleman, courteous, brave, and a lowly follower of Jesus.”

*Contributor: James Semmelroth Darnell*

Sign up at [www.ucc.org/ucc\\_roots\\_sign\\_up](http://www.ucc.org/ucc_roots_sign_up)

