

SPS History*

Beginnings

The Society for Pentecostal Studies, founded in 1970, was first envisioned by three men—**William Menzies** of the Assemblies of God, **Vinson Synan** of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and **Horace Ward** of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee). Formed with the intent “to serve the church world by providing an authoritative interpretation of the Pentecostal Movement,” the Society directed its energies toward bringing scholarship on the Pentecostal tradition to the fore.

At its founding meeting held Dallas, Texas coinciding with the Sixth Pentecostal World Fellowship Conference (WPF), 200 individuals gathered to discuss the state of Pentecostalism. The entire population was either Pentecostal or charismatic. To prevent misunderstanding and underscore its focus on the study of Pentecostalism, the Society quickly changed its name from the Society of Pentecostal Scholars to the Society for Pentecostal Studies.



1971 SPS: Edward Wood (Treas.), R. Hollis Gause (President), William Menzies (Pres.), and Vinson Synan (Sec.)

Membership

From the outset the Society’s annual meeting provided a dynamic forum for vigorous discussion. That discussion is invigorated by the Society’s commitment to be interdenominational, multi-ethnic, gender inclusive, and multi-generational in its membership.

A Scholarly Forum

In 1979 the first issue of *Pneuma: the Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* was published. Committed to forwarding the cause of Pentecostalism in the academy, the journal was to “contain the fruit of our scholarship in the form of articles given as papers in the annual meeting as well as other articles submitted for publication as well as book reviews.” Since its inception the journal has filled a need not met by the more informal *Newsletter* of the Society. A quick survey of the journal’s contents illumines not only the natural shifts in the Society, but its maturation as well.

The breadth of the Society is perhaps best seen at its annual meeting. Conference themes have varied effectively (see our web site for a listing of all past themes). In addition to its

plenary sessions, which focus on the theme of the conference, ten parallel Interest Groups provide papers, and Thursday Symposia usually include papers presented in areas such as Diversity, Canadian Pentecostalism, Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue, and other areas.



Vinson Synan and Russ Spittler, ca. 1973

The annual meetings are held at institutions that promote the scholarly study of Pentecostalism. A complete list of meeting locations is on our web site, sps-usa.org under “past meetings.”

Ecumenical

Ecumenism has been a natural by-product of the Society. That scholars outside of the Pentecostal circle wish to partake in the debate and contribute to the growing body of literature on Pentecostalism is proof incontrovertible of the admission of Pentecostalism into the academic firmament. But the Society has also opened the door for other discussions. Creating a forum has enabled Pentecostals to enter into dialogues with the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Church and the Wesleyan Theological Society. Other members, who apprise the Society of their discussions, are in conversation with the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, the Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue is only one year younger than the Society itself and was instituted by two of its earliest members. Aligning itself with the Council for the Study of Religion in the late 1980s was another crucial step in refining the Society’s position, academic study, and ecumenism. Informal Orthodox-Pentecostal talks were launched in 2010.

Unlike strictly academic societies, such as those for church history or biblical studies, and unlike strictly religious societies, the SPS stands, sometimes uncomfortably, with a foot in each camp. Annual meetings offer a full complement of sessions, be they academic or praxis oriented. Membership is interdenominational and multi-ethnic, and participants are as apt to be graduate students from secular schools as they are professors from religiously affiliated colleges.



For more information on SPS’ history, including a list of Past Presidents and SPS Executive Directors, see: <http://storage.cloversites.com/societyforpentecostalstudies/documents/history.pdf>

*Adapted and excerpted from the history article on the SPS web site.

Society for Pentecostal Studies

An International Community of Scholars Working within the Pentecostal and Charismatic Traditions—Established in 1970

For more information:
Society for Pentecostal Studies
sps-usa.org
Dr. Lois E. Olena, SPS Executive Director
1435 N. Glenstone Ave., Springfield, MO 65802
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Society for Pentecostal Studies

Annual Meetings

Each year SPS members from across the U.S. and around the world meet to present papers, participate on panels, listen to key plenary speakers on topics related to the Pentecostal-Charismatic/Renewal Movements, and enjoy times of networking and fellowship together. Collegial relationships and friendships forged at the annual meeting continue throughout the year through a number of scholarly and informal venues. A list of past meeting locations, proposal submission information, and papers from previous meetings are available on our Web site.



Interest Groups

Interest Groups. Society members enjoy participation in and ongoing networking through the following Interest Groups: Asian-American, Bible, Christian Ethics, Ecumenical Studies, History, Missions, Philosophy, Practical Theology/Christian Formation, Religion and Culture, and Theology. You can contact our current Interest Group leaders here: <http://sps-usa.org/#/home/interest-groups>.



Diversity Committee. SPS is committed to increasing access, visibility, and voice for populations and constituencies underrepresented in the theological and religious studies academics, including African-Americans, Latino/as, Native Americans, Asian-Americans and women. The Diversity Committee helps foster SPS' commitment to these goals, and to engaging and critically reflecting upon epistemological challenges created by transnational experiences and diversity within global Pentecostal Christianity.

Along with striving toward a healing of the racial divide of national and global Pentecostalism, the Society, in its proceedings, outreach and program, seeks to heal the divide between academy and church, study and pew, mind and heart. The Society encourages its members in the academy to consider bridge-building research that incorporates the participation and input of practitioners and that serves the academy, the church and the broader society.

SPS Membership

Full Member: \$70 Annually

Requirements: Hold an earned graduate degree from a recognized institution of higher education, currently engaged in Christian education (administrative or instructional), or have made significant literary contributions to Pentecostal literature and journalism. Applicants without an earned graduate degree should submit a statement of qualifications for consideration by the membership committee. Must subscribe to the Society's Statement of Purpose.



Associate Member: \$70 Annually

Requirements: Hold an earned graduate degree from a recognized institution of higher education, currently engaged in Christian education (administrative or instructional), or have made significant literary contributions to Pentecostal literature and journalism. Applicant without an earned graduate degree should submit a statement of qualifications for consideration by the membership committee. Cannot hold elected office.

Student Member: \$40 Annually

Requirements: Must be enrolled in an institution of higher learning. Cannot hold elected office.

Retired Member: \$40 Annually

Requirements: Must be retired from full-time employment. May be retired at Full or Associate level based upon meeting the above listed requirements.

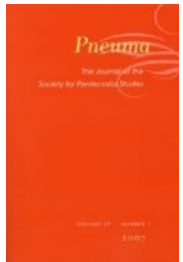
Benefits of Membership

- ✓ Discounted Annual Meeting Registration Rate
- ✓ Three Annual Issues of the Society's Journal, *PNEUMA*
- ✓ Free Online Access to All Past Issues of *PNEUMA* Journal
- ✓ Two Annual Issues of the Society's *Newsletter*
- ✓ Eligibility for Leadership Roles in the Society
- ✓ A Remarkable Venue of international Pentecostal and Charismatic Scholar-Practitioners with whom to Share and Nurture Your Current Research in Order to Make a Contribution to the Kingdom of God

Become a member or renew today:
<http://sps-usa.org/#/membership>

Pneuma

"*Pneuma* is the Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS). Since its founding in 1970, the SPS has become an international society of scholars interested in Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. Though many of the more than 600 members of the Society belong to one of the Pentecostal or Charismatic churches, a number of others are involved in the Society's annual meetings from other churches or merely from university settings.



In 1979, *Pneuma* first appeared as the Journal of the SPS. The Journal became a major medium for the international discussion of scholarly issues related to Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. *Pneuma* publishes peer-reviewed articles on matters related to the special interest groups of the SPS, namely, biblical studies, history, theology, missions, praxis, ecumenism, ethics, philosophy, and religion and culture. The Journal cherishes an ecumenical and an international vision as well." (<http://www.brill.com/pneuma>).

Pneuma Co-Editors: Amos Yong and Dale Coulter; *Pneuma* Book Review Editor: Néstor Medina



2012-2013 SPS Executive Leadership

President: Paul Alexander, Palmer Seminary

First VP: Lee Roy Martin, Lee University

Second VP: Ken Archer, Southeastern University

Immediate Past President: Jeff Gros, Memphis Seminary

Secretary-Treasurer: Zachary Tackett, Southeastern Univ.

Executive Director:

Lois Olena, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary



For a complete listing of SPS Interest Group Leaders and Committees, see <http://sps-usa.org>.