

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.



William Menzies



Vinson Synan

At its founding meeting held in Dallas, Texas coinciding with the Ninth Pentecostal World Fellowship Conference (PWF), 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.



Horace Ward

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, and participants are as apt to be graduate students from secular schools as they are professors from religiously affiliated colleges.



(L-R) officers elected at the 1970 SPS: Edward Wood (Treas.), Wm. Menzies (Pres.), R. Hollis Gause (Pres-elect), and Vinson Synan (Sec.)

Since its founding, the SPS has become an international society of scholars interested in Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. Though many of the more than 500 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.

A Scholarly Forum

In 1979 the Society published its first issue of *Pneuma: the Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*. 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 newsletters 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.



Vinson Synan and Russ Spittler, ca. 1973

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, 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.

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. Creating a forum has enabled Pentecostals to enter into dialogues with the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches 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 conversations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Pentecostals were launched in 2010.

For More Information...

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 context. Annual meetings offer a full complement of sessions, be they academic or praxis oriented.

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

*Adapted and excerpted from history resources 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

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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: 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 at SPS-USA.org (*Interest Group* tab). A Women's Caucus and a Student Caucus group also meet.



Diversity Committee. SPS is committed to increasing access, visibility, and voice for populations and constituencies underrepresented in the theological and religious studies academies, 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 healing the racial divide of Pentecostalism, the Society 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: \$87 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. Can hold elected office.



Associate Member: \$87 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: \$47 Annually

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

Retired Member: \$57 Annually

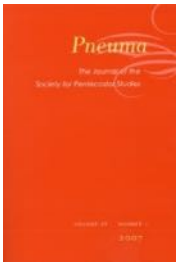
Requirements: Must be retired from full-time employment. May be retired at Full or Associate level based upon meeting the above listed requirements.

Benefits of Membership

- ✓ Discounted Annual Meeting Registration Rate
- ✓ Four Annual Issues of the Society's Journal, *PNEUMA*
- ✓ Free Online Access to All Past Issues of *PNEUMA* Journal
- ✓ Issues of the Society's monthly e-updates
- ✓ 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

Pneuma

Pneuma is the Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. Since its appearance in 1979, the Journal has served as 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>).

Each year the Society's Editorial Committee presents the *Pneuma* Book Award to an outstanding book that represents a significant achievement in scholarship related to Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. Visit our web site to view a list of past award recipients.

Pneuma Editors: Nimi Warioboko and Bill Oliverio

For a complete listing of SPS Interest Group Leaders and Committees, see sps-usa.org.



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