



**14th Conference of the European Research
Network on Global Pentecostalism
"Pentecostalism and Gender"**

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Department of Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology

Keynote Abstracts:

Queering Azusa: Towards Pentecostal Fugitivity

Keri L. Day, Princeton Theological Seminary

I am intrigued with how a reporter of the Los Angeles Times described the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 in Los Angeles, CA: as a “queer mixture” of rich and poor, black and whites. Surprisingly, Azusa is described as queer. Deviant. Outside of dominant racial, gender, and sexual norms, roles, and codes of the day. Newspaper reporters and Christian ministers would refer to Azusa as queer and sexually deviant, although the Azusa revival is often framed as a more theologically conservative revival focused on otherworldly Spirit-filled doctrines and practices. So, I ask: How might a queer reading of the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 in Los Angeles, CA, help one engage questions of anti-queer sentiment and practice, especially when assessing issues of gender and sexuality within contemporary Pentecostalism? Drawing on my book *Azusa Reimagined: A Radical Vision of Religious and Democratic Belonging*, I suggest that Azusa can be interpreted in a queer register, which might assist Pentecostal communities when engaging questions of gender and sexual difference. Namely, I want to argue that the Azusa Street Revival is a queer theological resource, expanding how we understand queer religiosity and aiding contemporary Pentecostalism when addressing questions of gender and sexual difference.

Gendering the Pentecostal God

Naomi Richman, University of Cambridge

The beguiling riddle of Pentecostalism’s relationship with gender—the ways it asserts gender inequalities whilst, at the same time, working to undo them—has served as the defining problematic for studies in this area, at least since the publication of Bernice Martin’s famous article “the Pentecostal gender paradox”, in 2001. This framing of the topic has nourished the development of a rich and diversified body of research. But it has also led to the uncritical adoption of a particular sociological understanding of gender, as a human social construct. In taking for granted that gender applies to humans and humans alone, scholarship on gender in Pentecostalism has been grounded in a secular reading of gender and of the human too. In this lecture, I ask if there are different, theological ways of thinking about gender that social scientific studies of Pentecostalism can integrate into their approach, and what there is to be gained by such a move. Drawing on my ethnographic research amongst Nigerian Pentecostals, I consider how their broader theological schemas of relationality and difference shape their ideas about gender, making a wider case for why studies of sexual difference matter to those interested in Pentecostalism.

Ethnographic Excursions in the Pentecostal Making and Remaking of Men

Brendan Jamal Thornton, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

In order to better understand global Pentecostalism's complex cultural footprint, scholars have been keen to explore its impact on gender roles and relationships. Ethnographic research in this area has become quite robust over the years owing in no small part to the fact that Pentecostals themselves have so much to say about gender and what it means to be a man or woman of God. Following important and pioneering work on Pentecostalism and women, interest in the study of men and masculinity has grown. Research on Pentecostal men over the past decade, particularly in places like Africa and Latin America, has helped deepen our appreciation of how gender discourses shape and are shaped by churchgoers in powerfully meaningful ways. Yet, despite their ubiquity, issues of masculinity in the church are still often overlooked and seldom engaged with critically. Reflecting on my own research on men, masculinity, and Pentecostal conversion in the Dominican Republic, this talk will review emerging themes and questions in the study of Pentecostal masculinities around the world, taking stock of important interventions in the field of Pentecostal studies, while charting new directions for future research on gender and religion.