**Kimberly Ervin Alexander’s Reflections on Her MWRC Visiting Research Fellowship**

**A Reflection on the Value of Research Time and Space—and Access to Resources**

From the end of June through August 9, for six wonderful weeks, I was privileged to work as Visiting Research Fellow of the Manchester Wesley Research Centre. My project, ‘Bearing Witness: Spirit Baptism in the Life of the Pentecostal and Her Community’, is an ongoing one which will culminate in a monograph examining the personal and communal meaning and significance of the experience of Spirit baptism for the Wesleyan-Pentecostal tradition. Oddly enough, little research has been done on how early Pentecostals actually *experienced* what is arguably the major distinctive of the movement.

For a number of years, I’ve been working through early Pentecostal periodicals which have now been digitized and are easily accessed, and have been able to publish an article here, a chapter there out of that research. But what is increasingly and painfully absent from my vocation as a scholar is the time and space to do such work. For many of us who work in Christian higher education, especially in Evangelical institutions, teaching loads are increasing while research time and travel funds are decreasing.

The value of six weeks of concentrated research time and space is inestimable in the life of the teacher-scholar. To be awarded this fellowship which provided lodging, access to archives, and a small stipend for weekly food expenses was a wonderful gift to me. In some ways, it was a gift of sanity! When one feels called to teach, but also to research and write, an imbalance in those three facets of one’s vocation—three facets that require integration—is quite frustrating and disorienting. So, the gift of time and space, is invaluable and allows the scholar to reorient herself.

As a Wesleyan-Pentecostal, it’s important for me to discover the connections and resonances between Wesleyan and Holiness movements and early Pentecostalism. The archives at MWRC provided an unexpected link, one that brought much of what I knew intuitively into focus, providing real evidence, and, deconstructed what some other historians had erroneously assumed. The archives hold a full run of *Tongues of Fire,* a periodical published by the Pentecostal League of Prayer (PLP). Though this was a Wesleyan organization and *not* identified with the emerging Pentecostal movement, it is significant because the Anglican vicar Alexander A. Boddy, leader of the Pentecostal movement in England, convener of the Sunderland Conferences, and publisher of *Confidence*, was a member of the PLP for years and served as secretary of the organization for the north of England; further, he was a speaker at their annual conferences. So, access to this periodical, which has not been digitized, gave me real insight into Boddy’s own spiritual formation as well as to his vision for the Pentecostal movement, which, I now believe, was based on the PLP model. This has not been explored by Pentecostal historians to date. In fact, the assumption has been that Boddy was influenced by the Keswick movement, with little evidence to support that thesis. Boddy’s Wesleyan influences had all but been ignored. I must add that it was in conversations with David Bundy that pointed me to *Tongues of Fire*. Being able to read through these issues, in that space provided, for days on end, gave me a lens through which to read testimonies of Pentecostal experience in Sunderland, and those experienced elsewhere in Europe and reported on by Boddy in *Confidence*.

Because of this time and space, and these hitherto unexamined resources (at least they are unexamined by Pentecostal scholars to this point!), I will be able to give a plenary presentation at the 2019 meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. The title of that address is ‘Receiving the Spirit in the Early Pentecostal Body: Sanctification, Spirit Baptism, and the Lamb Slain for Sinners.’ It was in Sunderland that these connections were made most prominently and it is because of the time, space, and resources provided through the MWRC fellowship, that I was able to see them.

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