

The History of Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) Maryland Extension Site

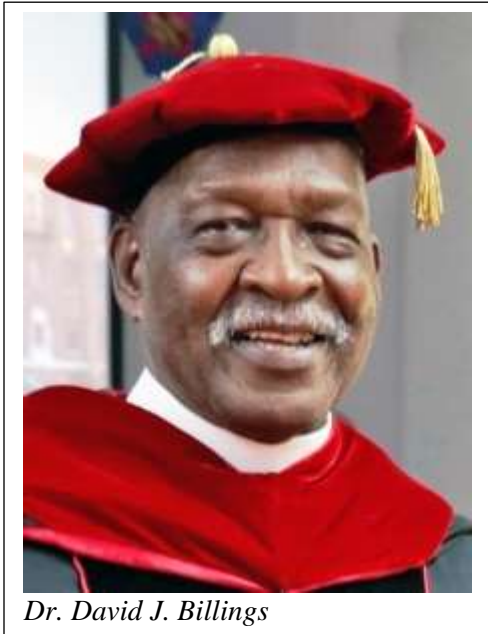
Cabot W. Peterson
November 2, 2016



The UTS Maryland Extension Site located at 9135 Piscataway Road, Ste 410 Clinton, MD 20735

Late in 2013, Dr. David J. Billings, a founding member of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) and Chairman of the Academic Committee on the Board of Trustees of the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS), was looking to expand the seminary's outreach and partner with an already existing health and educational program, of which he was the chairman.

He and Dr. John-Paul James, President and Dean of Logos Christian College of Washington, and a current Doctor of Ministry student at UTS, met with Dr. Kathy Winings, UTS Vice-President for Academic Affairs, to present their proposal. Soon, plans began to take shape. In the Fall semester of 2014 a single UTS course was offered; in the Fall of 2015 another course was added, with further courses being added in 2016



Dr. David J. Billings

Dr. Billings, who had moved from Brooklyn to southern Maryland in 2005, and Dr. James were already working with their program called "Total You," an integrative holistic health and educational program that combines spiritual, physical and nutritional approaches with the desired goal of providing a "totally" healthy individual. Wanting to expand the usefulness of the program by incorporating an academic component into their practice, they turned to UTS. His long association with UTS and Dr. Winings made the decision - and transition - easy for Dr. Billings.

"My experience with the Board and its teaching is what attracted me to UTS and also the commitment they have to the students," said Dr. Billings, "along with the academic record of UTS and its professors, Dr. Winings, Dr. (Michael) Mickler, Dr. (Andrew) Wilson, Dr. (Jacob) David.

"When I spoke with Dr. James I told him that I thought that maybe we should see if we can get together with UTS and let this be a UTS institutional branch down in this area because I had so many students that wanted to study. Now the program is beginning to move in a positive direction.

"Another important aspect was that the teaching was not necessarily denominational. They didn't teach dogma, but they taught from a theological standpoint. There are students from Japan, Korea, Africa, Philippines, United States and India who benefit from this type of teaching."

Feeling confident in their choice to partner with UTS, Dr. Billings and Dr. James approached Dr. Winings with their idea, who presented it to the UTS Board.

"Dr. Billings, who I've known for a long time, told me his vision was to always connect to UTS," said Dr. Winings. "We started talking at the end of 2013; 2014 was basically the planning stage, and then we really got it into gear in the fall of 2015, what I would call our 'official opening.'"

Enrollment for the Fall of 2015 was only nine students, and increased to just 11 by the spring of this year. Word soon got out, however, and through Dr. James' commitment, along with his influence among local Christian churches, enrollment jumped to 26 for the current semester, with endless possibilities for the future.



Dr. John-Paul James

“Our programs are expanding,” said Dr. James, “we have almost 30 students now, but our campus here could be 250 strong. That’s what our goals are; we could grow in numbers of 20 or 30 people coming in at one time. That’s every semester, providing we keep going ahead with our campaign in the churches, because that is where we are really drawing from.”

One of those students, Amos Williams, is a 38-year-old married father of two boys, ages three and four, who had heard about the program but initially rejected it. When he heard Dr. James speak at his church, however, he quickly changed his mind.

“He (James) sold me on it,” said Williams. “I saw his passion and his energy and that attracted me. He spoke about the whole program and UTS and what you can do with the degree once you get it.”

Now he’s trying to recruit a younger generation.

“What I tell the younger students that come through here is that you can take the experience, the education and the degree and make it work for what you want. You don’t have to stay where you’re at. Take it and run your own corporation, start a non-profit and help other people. I recruit them from that standpoint.”

The approach that Dr. James and Dr. Billings both share as the desired goal of “Total You” can be summed up in one word: integrative. In short, the integration of the spiritual with the practical as well as the physical with the nutritional. With the addition of an academic discipline component, you have the integration of mind and body for the benefit of the individual’s mental, physical and spiritual health, while also offering opportunities for a rewarding financial career.



Amos Williams

“Our program is hooked into a working program so that when they (students) come out they can do psychotherapy, and do other jobs besides just pastoring,” explained Dr. Billings. “It’s a little different. We have integrated medicine; we also have a dental practice downstairs in this building. Normally, religion is pastoring only, but there are other aspects that are needed in the church.

“So, that’s where we feel we are doing the broader scope of the church. We can take integrated medicine to all aspects of the country. Upon graduation the student will be prepared to do other things, so he or she will be able to make a living for their family.”

There are also plans underway to continue moving “Total You” forward, accentuating the existing collaborations with other institutions, which include the Department of Behavioral Health where students receive credits for their work in specialized training for counseling.

They also have an undergraduate level association with Oral Roberts University, and collaborative programs with Harvard on diabetes research, the University of Pennsylvania on cardiovascular care, and the HeartSmart program with Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York City.

“This campus is really beginning to be what I call the ‘missing link,’ said Dr. James. “It’s beginning to bring health and spirituality together. You will not heal without the understanding of spirituality. The Maryland campus is definitely the missing link and it is a model which all educational systems are moving towards. A more integrated and interdisciplinary position.

“Even if you’ve gone through four years of medical school you still need to understand how to integrate the mind and the body. So, it’s mixing psychiatry, counseling, medicine and spirituality together.

“I think it’s always been the intention of God for us to be holistically well balanced.”