

Unification Theological Seminary's 40th Commencement Ceremony

Hugh Spurgin
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On May 28, over 200 associates, friends and family members gathered in Barrytown, New York to attend the 40th commencement ceremony of the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS). Twenty-two candidates for graduation were conferred degrees at the ceremony, with several additional candidates honored in absentia. Two gentlemen, Dr. David Eaton of the New York City Symphony and the Rev. Dr. Michael Sykes of the United Missionary Baptist Church of East Orange, NJ, were also awarded honorary doctoral degrees.



Though the day was seasonably hot and humid, spirits were high and marked with gratitude at the commencement ceremony. Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Continental Chairman of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) North America, gave the commencement address. In addition to recounting his own experiences as a student at UTS from 1993-1996, Dr. Kim identified the connection in purpose between the founding of UTS and the establishment of the Universal Peace Academy (UPA) and Wonmo scholarship programs.

“These institutions,” he said, “were created by the founders of UTS, Father and Mother Moon, on the

same principle: to provide education centered on God to both America and the world.” Further lamenting the current state of confusion evident in America from the level of families to that of the current presidential candidates, Dr. Kim invited the graduates and all others in attendance to participate in the upcoming God Bless America Family Festival as an invaluable opportunity to help bring America back to God.



Dr. Hugh Spurgin, President of UTS and member of the original graduating class of 1977, likewise exhorted the graduates in his congratulatory remarks to take hold of the responsibility endowed to them by attending UTS. “God is sending you as his representatives to serve the people of despair in the world. He is sending you to bring love, peace, and hope to this world and to put an end to bigotry, selfishness, hatred, and corruption. Like a small mustard seed that has just been planted, the world doesn’t know you are coming; but the reach of your love and faith will grow, and you will be the ones to lead a spiritual revolution based on the love of God.”

Remarks were also given during the ceremony by Dr. Eaton and the Rev. Dr. Sykes in gratitude for the honorary degrees they received, and by two students representing the masters’ and doctoral cohorts, respectively: Mr. Samuel Mitchell, Master of Religious Education, and Dr. Drissa Kone, Doctor of Ministry in Peace and Justice.

Three musical performances were offered during the ceremony. Following the processional of the candidates, alumni, and faculty, Mrs. Ilwha Compton sang the national anthem to convene the event, and Mrs. Seiko Lee performed renditions of “The Lord’s Prayer” and “You’ll Never Walk Alone” during the course of the program.

The ceremony was fittingly opened and closed with prayers of congratulation and rededication, and a reception followed the conclusion of the event for all in attendance.

