

UTS is engaged in issues that are at the forefront of theological education

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Recently I was able to attend two important forums sponsored by The Association of Theological Schools (ATS). More than 270 graduate schools of theology in the United States and Canada form The Association of Theological Schools. UTS is an affiliate member of ATS.

The ATS Seminar for New Presidents in ATS Institutions, in New Orleans, in December 2015 provided opportunities for new presidents to network with peers from other seminaries and also with experienced presidents and experts on many facets of presidential work such as developing a

vision for the institution, team building, financial management, and institutional advancement. The Biennial Meeting of ATS in June 2016 held in St. Louis invited “ATS presidents, deans, and theological education leaders to learn and network as they examine new models that schools are exploring in service to their missions.” At that time, I was able to dialogue with approximately 50 seminary presidents or deans.

Both of those events showed me that UTS is engaged in issues that are at the forefront of theological education. Throughout the United States, churches are asking serious questions about the educational benefits of theological study for training priests, ministers and pastors. The political, social and economic forces of our times seem to demand a more “practical” orientation to problem solving. The question is “How does each theological school measure up?”

UTS, like other theological schools, is now educating students for a wide variety of ministries. We now see many of our graduates pursuing chaplaincy; other graduates have gone on to careers in the non-profit sector. Still others teach at elementary, middle and high school levels, and there are UTS graduates who are professors and administrators at universities, colleges and seminaries. Our alumni are represented in the counseling, health care, law, and business professions. And yes, we see many UTS graduates involved in pastoral ministries and church management. They are planting new churches or taking a ministerial role in an existing congregation.

There are the external challenges which all seminaries appear to be facing, and there are the internal challenges which are unique to each institution. Both need solutions. Our task at UTS is to explore innovative ways to meet those challenges and to renew our commitment to provide our students with the knowledge and tools needed for their success.

UTS operates in New York and Maryland, perhaps the most diverse places in the world. We are proud to have a footprint there. However, the demand for our training and degree programs is growing throughout North America and other countries around the world. In order to meet that challenge and opportunity, this academic year that began on August 24 UTS is expanding its programs to include more distance and online learning; at the same time there will be a growing emphasis on “intensives” (short 2, 4 and 6 week courses) at Barrytown.

I suspect that as it was in the time of Gideon, God does not need thousands and thousands of people to guide and model the path of truth and righteousness. He needs just a few good women... and men. The challenge is to properly equip our students to meet their unique callings and become the lights of truth and love for others, whichever field of endeavor they enter.

At UTS, we are very aware that the current climate in science, economics and politics needs the added voice of those trained in theological scholarship and ethical values. In an increasingly secular world, the guiding voice and love of God needs to be both heard and felt. The primary goal of UTS is to prepare our graduates as faith leaders who provide moral clarity with a tempering spirit for a world in need of reconciliation. This is done through graduate education in God’s Word, and in the historical, social and cultural contexts in which God has been working throughout the millennia to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. Our Heavenly Parent raises up spiritual leaders to herald in a world of love and peace. A new cohort of faith leaders is emerging from UTS who will be those champions, prepared both morally and intellectually to serve in their chosen missions and nations.

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