

## UTS Alumni Gather in Maryland to discuss the future of UTS

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*Alumni meet at the recently opened UCMD facility in Bowie, Maryland*

God is not dead and neither are UTS alumni, judging from a conference held at the Melford Community Center in Bowie, Maryland, on Saturday, June 27. Twenty-five alumni and friends from Virginia and Maryland spent a half-day to reconnect, brainstorm and discuss proposals on the future of the Unification Theological Seminary.

UTS President Dr. Hugh Spurgin was on hand to brief the graduates about progress made to steer the 40-year-old seminary out of some choppy waters and to answer questions about ongoing plans. Robin Graham, UTS development director, reported on the May 24 alumni conference at the Barrytown Memorial Weekend, which also was the weekend of the 39th commencement at UTS. At that meeting, Jose Ferrete and Matthew Goldberg expressed interest in the idea of setting up an ad hoc council of alumni in Maryland to raise consciousness about the UTS opportunity and to rally alumni.



*Dr. Spurgin explained that the UTS curriculum gives pastors skills training that they really need*

As he exhorted alumni to spread the word about the UTS opportunity, Dr. Spurgin said: “We need to ask the alumni to put the name of UTS out in the open. We need to get more people to study at our seminary.”

One participant pointed out that the holder of a religious education certificate that was earned before the Middle States Accreditation Board granted accreditation in the mid-1990s could get an upgraded, accredited master in religious education degree simply by paying UTS a registration fee. For some alumni with certificates (i.e., before 1996), to receive an upgraded accredited degree might mean taking one or two more courses costing about \$1,000. Dorothy Hill (UTS '80) gave an interview in May in which she explained that her master in religious education enabled her to teach in New York public schools for 20 years.

A new UTS extension center in a Maryland suburb is in the initial stages of development, Dr. Spurgin told the group. He explained that the extension center might utilize the new Imani Temple being completed in Suitland, Maryland, and would offer certificate courses in counseling for pastors and clergy doing therapeutic work,

The alumni heard how the UTS curriculum has been refined in the last five years to focus on skills and courses that pastors need. “UTS has greatly developed its ministry courses which prepare graduates to be pastors,” Dr. Spurgin said.

What will happen to the Barrytown campus, as there is no student body using it long term? Dr. Spurgin answered this question by saying several proposals are on the table, including preparing the campus to become a heritage site for Unificationist pilgrims who will be coming to visit the pilgrimage sites of East Garden and the Belvedere Training Center in Irvington and Tarrytown, New York.

Breakout sessions were held on four topics: 1) formation of an alumni council to assist UTS in its current challenges and future growth 2) discussion of long-term development projects for the Barrytown campus 3) prospects for alumni to make common cause on shared social issues, such as strengthening marriage and 4) discussion of proposals to shape the academic direction of UTS. (Summaries of the breakout sessions are being prepared and will be reported to all participants by email.)

At the New Hope Family Church worship service on Sunday, June 28, Dr. Spurgin was given time to talk about UTS and promote the value of being a UTS alum, as he has at many prior events.

“How many of you know why True Father came to the United States in 1972?” he asked the crowd. He explained that True Father came to help in a spiritual way to elect a U.S. president who would fight against communism. His other reason was to found a seminary so that Unification Church members could converse with clergy and theologians of other faiths as peers.

He went on say, “Some spouses of alumni have told me that they always wanted to go to the seminary and get their UTS degrees, but they couldn’t because of mission and/or family. But for many of you who are empty nesters, now you can get a UTS degree.”



*From left: Arthur Herstein, Dr. Hugh Spurgin, and Pauline Eby*