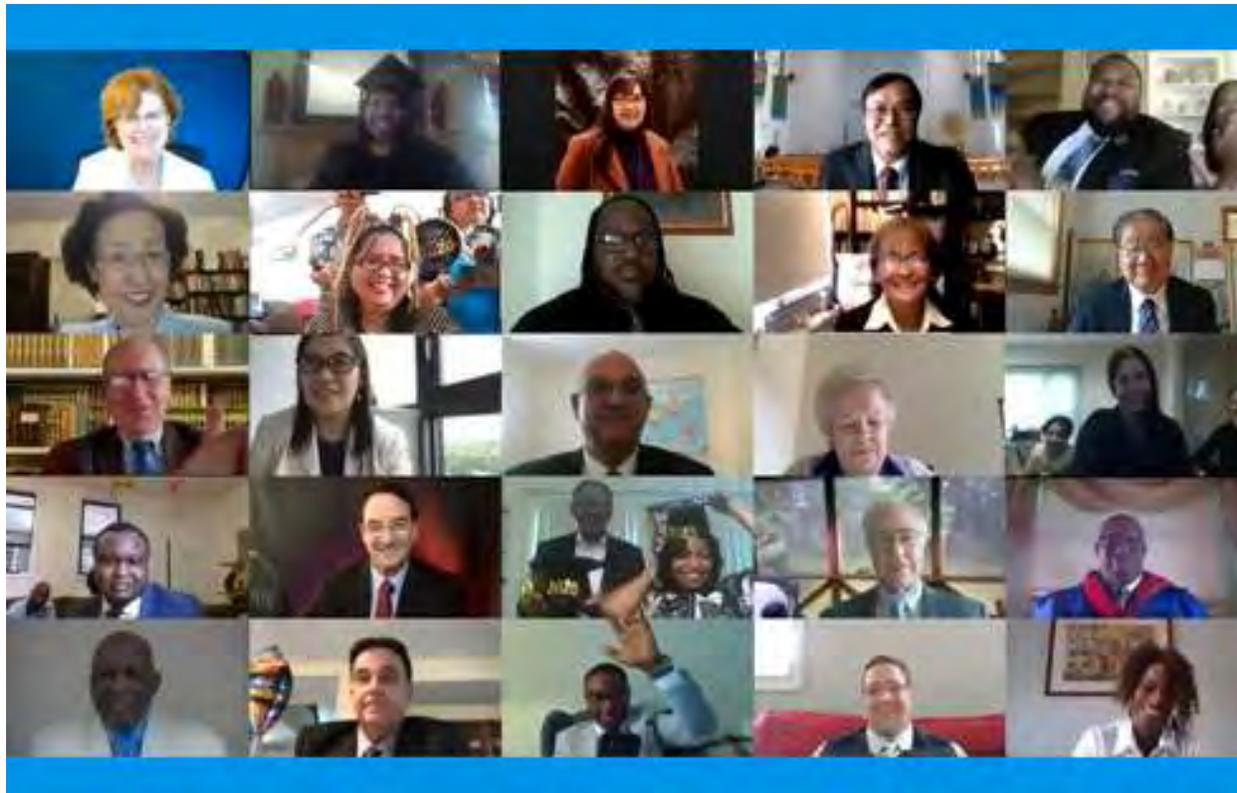


Unification Theological Seminary's 44th Annual Commencement Exercises

Michael Mickler
June 1, 2020



The Seminary's 44th annual commencement exercises for the UTS Class of 2020 were unique and unprecedented. With the world suffering through a global pandemic due to COVID-19, UTS conducted a virtual graduation for its nineteen M.R.E., M.A., M.Div. and D.Min. graduates. More than 150 "devices" were in attendance representing many more families and friends who logged on to share the graduates' joy in completing their degrees.

Dr. Christine Hempowicz, Vice-Chair of the UTS Board of Trustees, served as MC. Ms. Carla Mongado, a UTS M.A. student and musical theatre performer, sang the national anthem. Ms. Ute Delaney, Registrar and Senior Association Dean, delivered the invocation. Following a rendition of "Oh How I Need You" by Oji and Karen Bahian, Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Vice-President of Family Federation International and Regional Chair for the Family Federation of North America, a UTS Board member and UTS alumnus, delivered the Commencement Address.

Dr. Kim said he felt sorry for this year's graduates, having put in two or more years of hard effort but missing out on an in-person graduation, posing for many photos, greeting professors, saying goodbye to classmates, and enjoying "a wonderful reception with lots of food." He noted, "We are truly in a time of tribulation" and highlighted the loss of life, lockdowns, damage to the economy, psychological strain and political unrest. The question, he said, is "What Shall We Do?" and offered two responses. First, "we must secure our spiritual anchor." We must recognize, he stated, that "tribulation is never too far from people of faith" and often people of faith freely choose it to identify with those who suffer. Second, "we must find creative ways forward." He cited the "creative ways to honor this year's graduates" and "new ways to educate" as well as the example of UTS Co-Founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, who emerged from 55 days of prayer and devotion during the height of coronavirus, to break new ground with the establishment of Heavenly Parent's Holy Community and other bold initiatives. He called on this year's graduates to do the same.

Academic Dean, Dr. Keisuke Noda, and Dr. Kathy Winings, Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, presented the graduates. UTS President Dr. Thomas Ward awarded the degrees and offered Congratulatory Remarks. He extended an invitation to all graduates to be part of the Class of 2020/Class of 2021 Joint graduation ceremony that will take place one year hence. He also offered special congratulations to graduates from the Clinton, Maryland location which is closing this year. In his remarks, Dr. Ward pointed out, "Not only the study but the practice of religion allows us to be able, like Jesus, to take adverse situations and view them in such a way that they become positive and bright." He reminded graduates of the words of UTS Co-Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon that, as religious leaders, we must be prepared "to give, forget, and give again." Rev. Kevin Thompson, Rev. Byron S. Shipman and Dr. Franco Famularo offered graduate responses.

A special feature of this year's graduation was the launch of the UTS chapter of Theta Alpha Kappa, the

official academic honor society to recognize students for outstanding achievement in the study of religion and theology. UTS inducted Dr. Drissa Kone as Faculty Advisor and ten graduates into the chapter. Dr. Michael Mickler, UTS Vice-President and Professor of Church History, awarded the Seminary's Distinguished Service Award to Silvana Vanette Colmenares as the graduating student who best demonstrated the heart of service to others. He awarded the UTS Public leadership award to Marivir R. Montebon, the graduating student who best demonstrated creative leadership toward positive social changes.

Following a concluding musical selection of "Bonsai" by Carla Mongado, Dr. Lounne Rouse, National Co-Chair of the American Clergy Leadership Conference, Co-Pastor of the Family Church of New York City and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry at UTS, delivered the benediction. At that point, all graduation participants turned on their videos and mics to offer a spirited round of applause, concluding a historical graduation.

Graduating Class of 2020

Robert Pumphrey; Master of Religious Education
Roeline "Wee" J. Ramirez; Master of Religious Education

Abimbola Charles Adejayan; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Silvana "Vanette" Colmenares; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Juarnel M Covington; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Jizlibel Lagrazon Dohou; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Yael Kfir Zuker; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Renaira McBrown; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Marivir R. Montebon; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Wendy C. Schroeder; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Byron J. Shipman Sr.; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Menaira Shipman; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Kevin Thompson; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Robert L. Wilson; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Sharon E. Wilson; Master of Arts in Religious Studies
Kinda Manegda Zongo; Master of Arts in Religious Studies

Henry Lee Clay; Master of Divinity

Franco Famularo; Doctor of Ministry
Ye-jin Moon; Doctor of Ministry

Theta Alpha Kappa Inductees

Faculty advisor and UTS alumnus Dr. Drissa Kone
Ms. Mi Young Eaton, Acting Director of Education for Family Federation USA
Dr. Ye-jin Moon
Dr. Franco Famularo
Ms. Marivir Montebon
Ms. Roeline Ramirez
Ms. Vanette Colmenares
Ms. Youngsoon Quinn
Mr. Kinda Manegda Zongo
Ms. Yael Kfir Zuker
Rev. Kevin Thompson

Special thanks to Ms. Christina Lange, Director of Special Projects, Mr. Robert Pumphrey, UTS Network Administrator, and Manoranjan "Sam" Dennis for their yeoman labors in preparing the virtual ceremony.