

Career Advancement: Doctoral Candidates at Barrytown - William Selig

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August 5, 2015



William Selig, at his home in Rockville, MD

The dog days of summer are an intense “working vacation” for 12 clergy in pursuit of the Doctorate of Ministry (D.Min.) degree from the Unification Theological Seminary. Annual intensive courses take place at the Barrytown, NY campus of UTS during the first two weeks of August, as well as two weeks in February. The degree, which typically takes three to six years to complete, brings rewards which last a lifetime, according to Dr. Kathy Winings, UTS Vice President for Academic Affairs. The D.Min. is a professional doctorate targeted at individuals involved in some form of ministry. Students concentrate on areas of study such as evangelism, pastoral counseling, spiritual formation, church growth, or church leadership.

“I had a wonderful time. I encourage people to come to UTS, where the professors are competent and very helpful,” says Dr. Brenda Frazer, who graduated from the D.Min. program in May 2015. “And people want to see degrees, they want to see some letters behind your name. I think that’s important.” Dr. Frazer leads “God’s Empowering Center,” in Queens, N.Y.

“The D.Min. degree is very practical, because it is oriented to the work you are already doing,” says Dr. William Selig, working as a chaplain in Washington, DC hospitals since 2013. Selig, serving members of his own church with end-of-life issues since 2001, felt the need to develop and deepen his knowledge and skills. He began his D.Min. intensive courses in 2009 and received his doctorate in 2012. His dissertation project broadened his knowledge in every aspect of the Unificationist funeral rite known as the Seonghwa and led to the publishing of two seminal books.

Selig relates that during his D.Min. coursework at Barrytown the student cohort was diverse and the dissertations varied and creative. One classmate, who had Native-American ancestry, wrote her dissertation on the Native-American story-telling tradition as a method for teaching the Divine Principle.

“The Doctor of Ministry degree is the right degree at the right time, because it is practical and effective for today’s diverse ministries,” says Winings. She gives examples. “Dissertation Projects have focused on: increasing congregational participation in the church’s Bible studies and educational ministries; training directors of faith-based non-profits on how to utilize UN resources; improving the educational outcomes of the Pastoral Forums of the American Clergy Leadership (ACLC); enhancing the effectiveness of prayer

through understanding brain-based learning; assessing the impact of rites of passage programs for teenagers; and developing effective small-group ministries.

“The Dissertation Project allows students to address a specific issue or problem in ministry and to make recommendations from their study of that problem,” Winings tells UTS News.

“The uniqueness of our program design is that, instead of taking one major Research course that covers everything students need at the end of their coursework, I divided the traditional Research Course into 4 smaller modules that address the key elements of their Dissertation Project.

“The first module deals with: formulating the question that will guide their dissertation project; the second deals with creating the literature review; the third handles research design models and assessment of the data and the fourth is writing the proposal,” she explains. “This makes the research content more manageable and allows a focused student to actually end up submitting their first draft of their Dissertation Project proposal and so graduate in a more timely manner,” she explains.

The coursework for the DMin. program is completed through a total of four two-week Intensive sessions held on the Barrytown campus. Students do most of their degree work at home making it an economical degree – both time wise and financially. After two years of intensives, which adds up to 28 credits, students can take the third year or more for conducting and writing their 6-credit doctoral dissertation project, for a total of 34 credits. “It is oriented for people who have a regular job and have a family so they can fit it into their annual routines,” says Selig. Cost comparisons of other accredited theological schools granting doctoral degrees indicate that UTS is highly affordable, notes Joy Theriot, a UTS recruitment officer.

For the first time, Archbishop George Augustus Stallings, co-chairman of the ACLC and founder of the Imani Temple African-American Catholic Congregation, will be teaching one of the intensive courses. The course is titled, Theological and Ethical Perspectives of Ministerial Leadership. According to the UTS catalogue, “Students in this course will assess the theological and ethical issues of contemporary pastoral leadership with specific attention to their relevancy to the students’ own ministerial context. Utilizing case studies and ministry models, students will delve more deeply into the theory and practice of ministry to assist them in defining and shaping their continuing and future philosophy of ministry and their chosen model of ministerial leadership.”

Other courses being taught at UTS this summer include: Spiritual Formation and Integration; The Changing Face of Society: Diversity and Its Impact on Ministry; Transformational Leadership for a Postmodern World; Dissertation Research Seminar I: Formulating the Question; and Research Design Strategies.

The peer-learning model is key at UTS, according to Winings. “All D.Min. students are challenged to develop new insights into their ministerial effectiveness and leadership, to re-examine their own continuing theological and spiritual development in light of their present ministerial responsibilities, and to develop greater competency in their ministries.

“All students are expected to fulfill the requirements of the degree program while being engaged in their own practice of ministry – whether it is a congregational ministry, youth ministry, social service ministry or some other form of ministry,” says Winings. “The D.Min. is really one of the most exciting degree programs for those called to all forms of ministry.”