

45th Unification Theological Seminary graduation ceremony - UTS Class of 2021

Naokimi Ushiroda
May 29, 2021



Congratulations to the Unification Theological Seminary ([UTS](#)) Class of 2021! UTS, which was established in 1975 by the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, co-founders of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), held its 45th graduation ceremony online May 29.

"Today is definitely a milestone, a critical chapter in your lives," said UTS President Dr. Thomas Ward. "I congratulate each and every one of you at this momentous crossroad."

It's been a challenging year for the 29 UTS graduates who were conferred degrees in Master of Religious Education, Master of Arts in Religious Studies, Master of Divinity, and Doctor of Ministry. The Class of 2021, which featured a number of FFWPU leaders, is the second class to graduate virtually during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.



Rev. Naokimi Ushiroda

Dr. Chung Sik Yong, North America regional president of FFWPU, applauded the graduates' unwavering commitment to their studies during a tumultuous year and wished them every success going forward.

"It is my honor to recognize this year's graduating class," he said. "It's been more than a year since UTS students have been able to meet one another and take classes on campus. Now this time of exile may be coming to an end."

Several students expressed their heartfelt gratitude to UTS faculty, staff, family and friends who supported them in this great achievement.

"I have to thank all the faculty for their patience," said Rev. Miilhan Stephens, North America regional vice president of FFWPU and president of Youth and Students for Peace ([YSP](#)). "Thank you for taking such an interest in my journey. As you all know, the path of a Seminarian is unquestionably the path less traveled. Our class is going beyond religion, race, and culture, requiring unimaginable patience and love. And I've only experienced just that throughout my time at UTS."

For some, like Rev. Mari Curry, who first began her journey at UTS in 2014, graduating is a hard-won victory. Rev. Curry was juggling motherhood and a full time job when she was inspired to pursue her Doctor of Ministry.

"I grappled with the wisdom of committing to a doctoral program," said Rev. Curry, president of the

Research Institute for the Integration of World Thought ([RIIWT](#)). "But in the end, I followed my heart and conscience and never looked back."



Rev. Mari Curry

"This adventure had many turns and obstacles along the way," she said, "but now seven years and four jobs, four house moves, and four children later, this chapter is coming to a close and I wouldn't change a moment of it. Every day I'm eternally grateful for making this decision to attend UTS. This experience has transformed my life and has facilitated my development into a better mother, leader, and child of God."

The Class of 2021 follows in the footsteps of many esteemed FFWPU leaders and other notable alumni. In 1977, the late Rev. Moon said to the first graduating class, "Be the true physicians and true leaders who will inherit the main tradition of God and live in His image. Go forth to the world for the salvation of mankind, and lead all people of the world to enjoy total restoration."

In founding the graduate seminary, Rev. and Dr. Moon envisioned an advanced academic and professional education for current and future leaders of the Unification community and all faiths. UTS, with its diverse international student body and two campuses in Barrytown and Manhattan, New York, offers graduate programs of interfaith education designed to

"enhance students' relationship with God, their effectiveness in ministry and public leadership, and their service to the human family."

UTS faculty, many of whom are alumni, shared congratulatory remarks to the class as graduates embark on a new chapter in their lives.

"You represent a new generation of leadership, the first of many that will follow," said Dr. Ward. "I have great confidence that you share a particular bond of heart that will allow you to go very far."



45th UTS graduation ceremony via Zoom

Recipients of Master of Arts in Religious Studies:

Demian Aaron Dunkley
Luke Haruhisa Higuchi
Yoshie Manaka

Takayoshi Miyamoto
Yukihiko Miyazawa
Toree Shunta Oliver
Gani Rroshi
Marjeta Rroshi
Austin Samuel Sigamani
Miilhan Stephens
Naokimi Ushiroda
Manjola Vasmatics
Chad Watkins

Recipients of Master of Divinity

Emmanuel Nwobi Ndupu
Vanessa Marie Trader

Recipients of Master of Religious Education:

Andrea Higashibaba
Geoffrey L. Hinkle
Markus Lee Karr
Crispin Lumbay
Ronald J. Pappalardo
Jean M. Rondon
Recipients of Doctor of Ministry
James Apronti
Staffan Harald Berg
Andy Compton
Mari Yvette Miyazaki Curry
Fr. Babu K. Mathew
Samuel R. Mitchell
Denneze Nelson
Joseph Okolie Osubor

Theta Alpha Kappa Inductees:

Tasnah Bercy
Dr. Staffan Berg
Dr. Andrew Compton
Dr. Mari Curry, Demian Dunkley
Marjorie Estabas
Robert Estabas
David Evans
Jinil Fleischman
Evelyn Gasatan
Joshua Gurtatowski
Ibrahim Hamed Mohamed
Estella Harris
Grace Kellett
Crispin Lumbay
Yoshie Manaka
Dr. Babu Mathew
Renaira McBrown
Yukihiko Miyazawa
Sungmi Orr
Dr. Joseph Osubor
Natascha Phillips
Roland Platt
Margaret Repke
Gani Rroshi
Marjeta Rroshi
Miilhan Stephens
Vanessa Trader
Naokimi Ushiroda
Manjola Vasmatics.

You can learn more about the Unification Theological Seminary [here](#), and watch the 2021 graduation ceremony [here](#).