

## Unification Theological Seminary Graduation 2016: Years and Counting

Cabot W. Peterson  
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BARRYTOWN - On Saturday May 28, Unification Theological Seminary will host its 40th commencement ceremony at its campus in Barrytown, NY, overlooking the majestic Hudson River. Along with family, friends and graduates, the Chapel will ring with the voices of singers, guest speakers and audience participants. The property and grounds were purchased from the Christian Brothers in 1974 and the following year the first class of 56 students, chosen by the founders of UTS, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, began their classwork in the fall of 1975.

Two years later, in 1977, the first graduating class was honored. One of the graduates of that first class, Dr. Hugh Spurgin, is the current President of UTS. This year Dr. Spurgin will bestow degrees on students from four different areas - three Master degree programs and one Doctor of Ministry program - representing 10 different countries with Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Shinto backgrounds.

Two honorary doctorate degrees will also be awarded, the first to Rev. Michael Sykes, the Senior Pastor of the United Missionary Baptist Church in East Orange, NJ, for the past 28 years and a prominent member of the National Board of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC).

The second honoree is Mr. David Eaton, musical director of the New York City Symphony since 1985. Previous to that Mr. Eaton was the associate director from 1976-84.

Since his elevation to director, Mr. Eaton has literally “travelled the world,” performing with the NYCS in more than a dozen countries including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Russia, Canada, France, Vietnam, Israel, Serbia, Bulgaria, Paraguay, the Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

He has also performed in nearly as many cities in the U.S. including Boston, Detroit, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia and Washington D.C., as well as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, The Manhattan Center, and the famed Apollo Theater in New York City.

Rev. Sykes’ name was placed in nomination for the honor by Dr. Kathy Winings, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and Mr. Eaton was nominated by Mr. Dan Fefferman, a member of the Board of Trustees. Following introductions by Dr. Winings, the honorees will offer brief remarks.

Mrs. Ilhwa Compton will open the ceremonies with the playing of the National Anthem, Dr. Andrew Wilson, Professor of Scriptural Studies, will then say a few words of welcome, followed by the Invocation, offered this year by Imam Konate. Mrs. Seiko Lee will perform two solos, one following the Invocation and the second prior to Bishop Kim’s address. Dr. Spurgin will give Congratulatory Remarks. Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, who is the Continental Chairman for North America of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, will give the Commencement Address following the presentation of degrees. Dr. Joanne Hickman, Assistant Professor of Ministry and Homiletics, will give the benediction following Bishop Kim’s address.

Dr. Spurgin expressed his desire to see a large turnout at this year’s celebration, especially from UTS grads. “What we want to do for this 40th anniversary is to invite all the alumni to come,” said Dr. Spurgin. “Barrytown is so beautiful in May. That’s why we are having the graduation here and not in New York City. We want ministers, students, faculty and alumni to see Barrytown in the spring, including people who are coming from our programs in Maryland and New Jersey.”

At the conclusion of the festivities a photo session with the graduates will take place in the Chapel, followed by a reception outside on the lawn.