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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE CHURCH IS BREAKING ITS SILENCE AND TALKING ABOUT HIV/AIDS

Hear Perspectives from Rev. Dr. James Forbes, Attorney Anna Forbes Towns,
Rev. Dr. David Forbes, and Dr. Ronald Forbes



(Atlanta, GA, March 5, 2007) In the eyes of many, the Black Church has been far too quiet regarding the HIV/AIDS crisis impacting the African American community. The Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) will seek to break the silence regarding this important issue on March 22-23, 2007 as it hosts a forum themed "*Breaking the Silence: Church Conversations about HIV/AIDS*," Beginning at 9 a.m. in the ITC chapel, invited clergy, seminary faculty and students, and other faith leaders will participate in a dialogue designed to openly discuss the subject of HIV/AIDS and to create greater understanding of how faith leaders and faith communities can address HIV/AIDS in the United States.

An exceptionally compelling segment of the forum will be a discussion among members of the Forbes Family. Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr., Pastor-Theologian, Dr. David C. Forbes, Sr., Pastor-Sociologist, Dr. Ronald O. Forbes, Layman, Psychiatrist, and Dr. Anna Forbes Towns, Lay-Lady, Attorney and Advocate, all siblings, will engage in a candid "*dining room*" table discussion relative to the impact of HIV/AIDS on families, in light of their chosen disciplines; and the imperative that the African American Church "step up to the plate" in response to the national and global pandemic of HIV/AIDS. Following a brief statement from each Forbes panelist, the family will engage the audience in a dynamic session of Q&A.

While the subject of HIV/AIDS remains taboo among many churches, the data are too compelling to ignore. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Blacks represent 13% of the U.S. population, yet represent nearly half of the one million Americans living with HIV. African American women have been severely impacted. HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death for Black women aged 25-34 years. These and other data clearly illustrate that the HIV/AIDS crisis has impacted every aspect of the African American community.

“ITC is the place where many of the nation’s and the world’s pastors, teachers, and preachers received their academic credentials and went forth to serve the world’s congregations - making ITC a fitting context for beginning a long overdue and transparent conversation about HIV/AIDS,” says ITC President, Michael A. Battle.

In addition to the Forbes Conversation, ITC’s *“Breaking the Silence: Church Conversations About HIV/AIDS Forum,”* will present faculty and students from member institutions of the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada, who will address the issue from a variety of perspectives including:

- exploring theological tenets to provide a foundation for HIV/AIDS prevention
- the mission of the Black Church in the era of HIV/AIDS and;
- overcoming stigma and promoting compassion and care for persons infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

The *“Breaking the Silence Forum”* is perhaps the boldest step among the topics explored by the ITC during the past two years of public policy issue-oriented forums. To schedule interviews or for additional information and/or registration availability for *“Breaking the Silence: Church Conversations About HIV/AIDS,”* call 404-527-7761 or 404-527-7718.

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