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THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CENTER RENOWNED FOR THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL SCHOLARS HIRES TWO NEW EXPERTS



(l-r) Drs. Reginaldo Braga and Jamal-Dominique Hopkins

Atlanta, GA (September 22, 2008) The Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) continues its mission to educate men and women, as Christian leaders for ministry and service to the community and church in Atlanta and around the globe by adding to the faculty two new biblical scholars Dr. Jamal-Dominique Hopkins (one of the few African American scholars trained in the Dead Sea Scrolls) and Dr. Reginaldo Paranhos Braga Jr., a Princeton graduate from Brazil whose ministry specializes in multiculturalism. They join many of the faculty at ITC who are nationally recognized experts in their fields, 90 percent have earned doctorate degrees.

Dr. Hopkins felt the call of the ITC. While matriculating through his academic career he decided he wanted to give back and this was the perfect opportunity to do just that. His aim is to take all that he has learned and impart it to others. "ITC was an answer to prayers," said Hopkins. This international Bible scholar and Dead Sea Scrolls expert has joined the ITC as Assistant Professor of New Testament and will also teach courses in New Testament languages, literature, as well as Dead Sea Scrolls and Intertestamental studies. Not many have seen the actual Dead Sea Scrolls up-close and personal like Dr. Hopkins.

Dr. Hopkins graduated from Howard University (cum laude) in 1995 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Radio/TV/Film Production, which is his second love. This multi-talented academian said that if he were not teaching he would be making films. He obtained his

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Master of Arts degree in Bible Studies and Theology in 1997 at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California and holds a Doctorate of Philosophy degree in Religions and Theology from the University of Manchester in England where he and his wife Makini and their infant son Joshua lived for four years. In 2004, after receiving his Ph.D., he and his family returned to the United States with a new addition to the family, a newborn daughter, Kyla.

Hopkins is an ordained elder in the Church of God and Christ, an actor, writer, teacher and world renowned lecturer throughout America as well as in countries including; Scotland, Italy, England and Slovenia. He has authored several articles including “Dead Sea Scrolls: Jerusalem Priesthood in the Scrolls,” in the *Encyclopedia for the Historical Jesus* (ed. Craig A. Evans: New York: Routledge Press, 2008).

Hopkins says that because of this information age we are living in, “It is a good time to be a thinker.” He feels it is important to think things through critically, who you are and not just where you are currently but think globally. “It’s not just about you, your city, or your state. We have to think beyond the United States. We need to be conscious of the types of images other countries have of African Americans,” said Hopkins. He also believes that every American needs a passport to be a part of the global community.

Also joining the ITC is Dr. Reginaldo Paranhos Braga, Jr., as Assistant Professor of Christian Education, who has a very different background than most of his students in that he was born in Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil. “Boy it feels just like home,” explains Dr. Braga. The relation between the United States and Brazil – Northeast Brazil is similar to the Southern states and Southeast Brazil is similar to the Northern states. “People are friendly here (in Atlanta), they are great talkers and more spontaneous.” And he knows the difference after living in New York for many years.

Dr. Braga was contacted by the ITC, resulting from a search to fill the position of a retiring professor in Christian Educator and Reginaldo Braga fit the bill. “It is an opportunity for unique dialogue,” said Braga who is very involved with multicultural ministry. He is very excited and envisions opportunities for new realities and a new paradigm. Dr. Braga knows first hand about multiculturalism from being the minister for Multicultural Ministries at his previous church, West-Park Presbyterian Church in New York.

Currently, Rev. Braga is the Pastor of South Presbyterian Church in Yonkers, New York. Dr. Braga says, “There are White Scottish, African Americans, Indian, Guianese, Hindu, Muslim, Presbyterian, Caribbean, Jamaicans, Trinidadians, and Latinos from Brazil, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico and Guatemala all under one roof in one congregation”. This breaks the notion of Sunday at 11:00 a.m. being the most segregated time and day.

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Dr. Braga joins the ITC with a wealth of knowledge and experience. In 2003, he received his Doctorate of Education in Religion and Education from Teachers College-Columbia University, New York; and in 1995 obtained his Master of Theology in New Testament, from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey. In addition, Dr. Braga speaks Portuguese, Spanish, French and German and reads Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Braga has been a full-time and adjunct professor since 1989 and has presented several theological papers in Brazil and around the country. Dr. Braga also served as a volunteer chaplain with the American Red Cross and provided pastoral care in the aftermath of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, to rescue workers and volunteers in New York.

While working on his Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Dr. Braga worked at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, NJ a huge level 1 trauma hospital. Dr. Braga considered that an invaluable experience that probably propelled him on the multicultural tract. “There were lots of opportunities to learn about self and other people. CPE brought so many things— identity, life, death and theology all together. It taught me how to truly respond to need and be true to God and self,” said Dr. Braga.

As a fully accredited historically Black seminary, the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) was founded in 1958 as an independent, non-profit, coeducational graduate theological school created to train men and women for leadership in church and society. Today the institution trains students from all across the globe and is diverse in age, ethnicity, gender, and denomination.

The ITC is a consortium of six different denominational constituent seminaries and two affiliate fellowships; Morehouse School of Religion (Baptist Affiliate), Gammon Theological (United Methodist Affiliate), Turner Theological Seminary (African Methodist Episcopal), Phillips School of Theology (Christian Methodist), Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary (Presbyterian Affiliate) and Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary (Church of God in Christ Affiliate). Richardson Ecumenical Fellowship is comprised of several other denominations beyond the six affiliate schools and OTHER students also attend the Lutheran Center at ITC.

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