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## **ITC RECEIVES \$1.5 MILLION GRANT FROM LILLY ENDOWMENT**

(ATLANTA, GA)--The Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) is pleased to announce that it has received a \$1.5 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The grant is part of Lilly Endowment's Young Adult Initiative to help encourage congregations as they engage young people and work with them to design innovative ministries that support and enrich their religious lives. The Endowment is making a total of \$19.4 million in grants that will fund efforts across the nation to strengthen congregational work with young adults, ages 23 to 29.

"We are grateful to Lilly Endowment and we are pleased that ITC is included in this important, nationwide effort," said ITC President Edward L. Wheeler. While recent studies confirm the expanding gap between the church and young adults, developing new and effective ministries which appeal to members of Generation Y and beyond is essential if the church is to maintain its role as the primary source of religious enhancement. This grant represents the seed for a potentially abundant harvest of post-millennials reconnecting with the church."

ITC is one of 12 colleges, universities and theological schools that are taking part in the initiative. The organizations are located in 10 states and the District of Columbia and reflect diverse Christian traditions – Mainline Protestant, evangelical and historic African-American denominations, as well as Roman Catholic, Orthodox and independent congregations. At the heart of this initiative is a commitment to help faith communities transform the ways they think about young adults and how they respond to their spiritual needs.

"Congregations can easily slip into old practices of ministry that are unhelpful or even push away young adults rather than engage them and draw them into ministry and service opportunities," said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment's Vice President of Religion. "A significant part of this work will focus on helping congregational leaders understand young adulthood today and the changing contexts that shape what young adults value and expect."

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"For us," said Wheeler, "this grant is particularly meaningful because it is consistent with our day-to-day efforts to make ITC an agent of transformation for lives of individuals, communities, and the world. I extend my sincere thank

you to Professor Emerita, Dr. Anne Streaty Wimberly and Minister Pamela Perkins for their outstanding proposal to the Endowment. Through their leadership, I am confident that congregations will transform their ministries and young adults will be reconciled to the church.”

Under the grant, ITC will establish a “Connecting with Hope Innovation Hub,” to assist an interdenominational group of 24 congregations in a 150-mile radius of Atlanta to critically assess and implement new approaches to their ministries with young adults ages 23-29. Hub partners will collaborate to envision, develop, implement, evaluate and establish a way of sustaining ministries that link African-American young adults’ real life and often tough stories with their Christian faith formation, practices and leadership with and beyond the church according to their gifts and interests.

The restricted grant covers a five-year period. Anticipated outcomes include a resource on innovative congregational ministry with young adults evolving from Hub learning and ministry practices; a consultation on young adult ministry; web-based dissemination activities; and a plan for an ongoing network of hubs.

### **About ITC**

Established in 1958, The Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) is a Christian Africentric ecumenical consortium of seminaries and fellowships that educates students who commit to practicing justice and peace through a liberating and transforming spirituality to become leaders in the church, local and global communities.

Its seminaries include the Morehouse School of Religion (Baptist); Gammon Theological Seminary (United Methodist); Turner Theological Seminary (African Methodist Episcopal); Philips School of Theology (Christian Methodist Episcopal); and the Charles Harrison Mason Theological Seminary (Church of God and Christ). The Selma T. and Harry V. Richardson Ecumenical Fellowship provides theological training to students from various other faith traditions.

**Lilly Endowment Inc.** is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family - J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons J.K. Jr. and Eli - through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly & Company. The Endowment exists to support the causes of religion, education and community development. Lilly Endowment’s religion grant making is designed to deepen and enrich the religious lives of American Christians. It does this largely through initiatives to enhance and sustain the quality of ministry in American congregations and parishes.

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