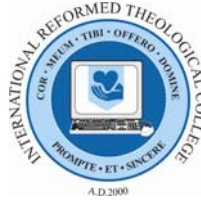


INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE



An online college that teaches in Portuguese

We are looking for supporters for this ministry which provides Reformed theological education to students in Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, and worldwide, students who do not live near a seminary and cannot move away to go to a traditional college.

“I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.” (Romans 1:11-12)

A Blessed Thanksgiving Trip

As part of the tenth anniversary celebrations of the IRTC, my wife, Lucille, and I made a trip to Brazil from June 14 to July 14, 2011. The Lord graciously blessed all of our travels and activities. It was so inspiring to join Brazilian brothers and sisters in giving thanks to the Lord for his grace and sustenance throughout these years. Even though we have had limited financial support, we have been privileged to serve churches by providing theological training and Christian higher education in other fields of study by means of distance education. Students, in particular, gave thanks for the quality and faithfulness of the teaching they received. They understand how tiring and demanding this journey has been for the instructors and administration, given that most of the labors were fulfilled on a voluntary basis and with very few gratuities.

When the College was founded on October 17, 2000, the plan was certainly not to operate an educational institution as a volunteer service. It was thought that the proposed ministry was much needed and that, in time, there would be enough churches and Christian brothers and sisters partnering with the new college, so that the institution's very modest budget would be fully funded. In his wisdom, the Lord has tested us during all the years of our existence, particularly by limiting financial support. At the same time, He has graciously granted some twenty men and women who have caught the vision for this college and given them such commitment that they have persevered in their service in teaching and administration.

We give thanks for the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel which are the content of our teaching. We give thanks for truly faithful instructors and administrative staff. We give thanks for the technology that allows us to serve churches in lands and regions that do not have good access to brick and mortar schools of Reformed higher education in Portuguese. We give thanks for students who have taken the risk and found that their confidence in the IRTC was not misplaced. Now let me tell you about our visits.

From the Northeast to São Paulo

First we were in the northeast coastal region, where we previously lived and ministered for 21 years. We enjoyed precious fellowship with three of our children and their families, as well as with many other dear brothers and sisters in the Lord. God granted me the privilege of preaching in two Reformed congregations. Even the slightly rusty Portuguese did not mar the joy of worshiping with beloved friends in those familiar buildings. Our hearts overflowed with thanks to the Almighty, who preserves and protects his sheep.

Next, we flew to São Paulo, where the IRTC was founded in 2000. Again the fellowship was most encouraging. On the Lord's Day I preached to the youth of a Korean Presbyterian Church. The day after, we met with two of the founders of the IRTC and two faithful supporters. Besides making up for lost time in our conversations, several good suggestions were made for improvements to the ministry of the College. One was to enhance our website with free 20 minute videos, teaching God's truths at a less academic level.

North to the Amazon

From São Paulo we went to Belém, a port city at the mouth of the mighty Amazon. Here the IRTC was privileged to commemorate her tenth anniversary in the Central Presbyterian Church, the church that has provided strong support for the college from the beginning. It maintains an office for the IRTC, where our registrar and one of our computer techs have contributed greatly to our administration. The occasion was a conference for the public, organized annually in cooperation with the "Puritan Project," a group that has been active in Brazil for some 20 years, organizing conferences, distributing literature, and publishing books and a journal – all with the purpose of restoring the historic Reformed faith among Evangelicals in the Portuguese-speaking world. I must say that I do not know any other church that welcomes her guests as warmly as does the Central Presbyterian Church in Belém.

The IRTC was granted the first hour of this conference to publicly thank the Lord and those who have labored so diligently to provide sound teaching through distance education for ten years. This was done by means of a historical overview, a power point presentation, words of exhortation from Scripture, thanksgiving prayer, and plaques of recognition for the church and for instructors and administrative personnel. Rev. Américo Menezes and sister Sara Leite, both students of the IRTC, assisted me in this program. On Saturday the IRTC hosted a meal at a restaurant in a historic building in the city. Conversations with teachers and other participants in the IRTC led to ideas such as, the development of a program of studies for primary and secondary school teachers to deepen their understanding of the Biblical worldview. Another was to organize conferences for young people to prepare them for confronting secularism in the universities they may attend. One sad note was that Dr. Paulo Anglada, the pastor of the church, one of the founders of the IRTC, and the professor who teaches more courses for the IRTC than anyone else, was not able to be present for any of the conference activities. He was suffering from excruciating pain in his back.



Belo Horizonte and Another Conference in the Northeast

After Belém we were hosted in Belo Horizonte by the chairman of our Board of Directors, Rev. Ulisses Horta Simões, and his wife, Maiza. We talked non-stop as we shared our mutual interests and enjoyed each other's company. At a meeting with some of our instructors and several other brothers interested in the well-being of the IRTC, a major topic was that of cooperation with other Kingdom ministries. Returning to the northeast, we attended the last day of a "Puritan Conference" in Maragogi, where we were warmly welcomed by old friends and new, including several members of the IRTC team. We were again privileged to speak a few words about the IRTC and were blessed by prayers offered up on our behalf. Here, too, some important discussions were held with a board member and an instructor of the college.



From Maragogi we went to Recife to rejoice in more fellowship with brothers and sisters. I preached in two Reformed congregations we had left behind when we departed Brazil ten years before. The trip was tiring, but very uplifting, thanks be to God. We were, once again, impressed by the great importance of the ministry of the IRTC. Please pray for us.

Ralph F. Boersema, president