



INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

TEACHING REFORMED THEOLOGY ONLINE
TO PORTUGUESE SPEAKERS WORLDWIDE

Newsletter

www.pro-rege.net

Bristol, VA – December/2015

"Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."

1 Corinthians 9:25

An Imperishable Crown

Ralph Boersema, president

As 2015 swiftly draws to a close we are eager to share another newsletter with you. We want to tell you about time spent at an important Reformed Conference in Brazil, a summary of courses and students this year, student descriptions about what it is like to do distance learning through the IRTC, and about two graduations. We shed tears as our beloved instructor, Sebastião Guimarães graduated to the heavenly realm, following illness with cancer. We miss him and also joy in God's grace to him in granting him his imperishable crown. We further rejoice as we announce the first graduate from one of our courses. Arthur Emmanuel Pascoal Costa recently qualified for the diploma of Bachelor of Christian Studies (B. C. S.)! Since our students generally take only 4 to 8 courses a year, it takes quite a long time to complete the 40 courses in this program of studies. We plan to tell you more of Arthur's story in the next newsletter. The final item in the present newsletter updates you about our financial support. Are you able to help us in our urgent need before closing out the year?

Student Perspectives On Distance Education

Earlier this year I asked our school community to tell us what they think new students ought to know in order to do well at the IRTC. What stood out for me in the responses given was something I have always stressed, namely, that dedication and self-discipline are very important for distance learning, in the same way as they are for athletic success. It is, of course, not surprising that what is needed is the same as what is needed to gain the Lord's imperishable wreath.



Here is an overview of the observations that were made.

The 9 hours weekly that the IRTC estimates to be needed for each course turned out not to be an exaggeration. The studies are demanding and that is good. Students should also make good use of the forums and interactions with the instructors. You must be disciplined and well-organized. It is vital to make a plan for all your activities for the 10-week module and stick to the plan. You cannot download the lessons over the course of the week and then expect to take care of them in a lightning study session on the weekend. That's a recipe for failure. Also, you must not hesitate to consult the instructor about anything that is not clear to you.

Do not cut back on your devotional exercises. They should not be replaced by course work. Be sure to be in prayer about your studies.

Distance education is for most people, but not for everyone. Someone who needs the support of face-to-face contacts to keep himself disciplined will have difficulty with distance learning. This problem can be overcome if a local mentor, such as a pastor, regularly meets with the student to keep him on track and to discuss the content of the lessons with him. At the same time, students who develop disciplined and independent study habits are better equipped for pastoral ministry, since it requires similar study habits.



It is an advantage that the IRTC lessons are presented as text. This allows them to be printed out and repeatedly read and studied. Another advantage is that those who live far from urban centers with seminaries can

also study theology. Further, distance education is a good solution for people like medical doctors who have work schedules that are incompatible with classroom education. We also have a captain on the high seas, who is progressing well in our theology studies, something he could never do without online distance education. A student in Mozambique told us that, after graduating from a Bible college, he was delighted to learn about our college after ten years of looking for a way to continue his studies. He is a regional pastor, responsible for 50 congregations, spread over three states. He works in the daytime visiting the churches and does his IRTC studies on his laptop late at night.



Students also offered advice for the faculty and College directors. Instructors must be sure to quickly respond to all student questions and contributions. They should also be altogether clear about what is expected in the assignments. Lastly, it is the instructor's responsibility to stimulate interactivity among the students. Another suggestion made was to give special attention to making our education useful for students with visual and auditory deficiencies. In this regard, I need to express my own disappointment that the new cloud-based learning environment that we now use has not prioritized accessibility for the blind. With regard to the hearing-impaired, the IRTC is well-adapted for them. In response to the survey, we also had another urgent appeal for access to an online virtual library, since it is extremely difficult for some of our international students to obtain the books required in our courses.

FIEL Conference in Sao Paulo

The Fiel Publishing House, a very fruitful Reformed ministry, started in the 1960's, held a Christian leadership conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil, October 5-9, 2015. The conference theme was "Revive us, and we will call on your name". The speakers were Steven Lawson, Hernandes Dias Lopes, Conrad Mbewe, Franklin Ferreira, Héber Campos Jr and Mack Stiles. Our Brazilian promotional rep, Sara M. C. Leite and her husband Túlio (a member of our Board of Directors) were there. Sara brings the following report:



"The year is ending and I could not fail to give a report of our time at the FIEL conference of October 2015.

Besides the opportunity we had to be representatives for the IRTC, we also experienced sweet fellowship with the body of Christ, as we met lots of brothers and sisters who come to events such as

this.

These conferences make it possible for brothers and sisters who only know of each other through the Internet to meet face-to-face. Others who come from distant cities are tremendously encouraged by the content of the messages and by the opportunity to fellowship with so many members of the same body of Christ.

In this context, the promotion work for the IRTC is not simply to distribute pamphlets and brochures, but to create relationships, to converse a lot, to answer questions about the College, and to introduce some of the teachers who are there to potential students.

Many people are already familiar with the ministry of the IRTC from previous conferences. Some of these have become part of our work community as they man booths to promote other ministries such as: Martin Bucer Seminary, Charles Spurgeon Theological School, the Mackenzie Education System, and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). We are also thankful for the assistance we received from one of our students, Daniel Basso and his wife, Luana.

May our Lord be served as He makes our hands willing to spread the Kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ."

Here are some pictures of the event which include Túlio and Sara Leite, some of our instructors (Leandro Lima, Luis Fernando and Héber Campos Jr), and student Daniel Basso (with his wife Luana), as well as Elli Lundquist from FIEL:



IRTC Annual Report

In 2015 the IRTC offered 22 courses distributed among the four 10-week modules. We had the enrollment of 28 new students throughout the year, making a total of 105 students (65 were active in 2015).



Of the total student body 61 live in Brazil, 25 in Mozambique, 4 in Japan, 4 in Canada, 1 in France, 1 in Italy, 3 in the United States, 2 in the Netherlands, 2 in Senegal, 1 in Portugal, and 1 in Qatar.

This report gives us an idea of the extent and importance of the educational ministry that the IRTC carries out, providing quality reformed education for servants of God around the world. Via the Internet the IRTC arrives in many places where there is no theological seminary or residential Biblical orthodox education.

May the Lord pour out His grace on the board, staff, teachers and students in the year 2016 in order that His Word can be taught with fidelity to the four corners of the earth.

Why and How to Support the IRTC

The College has set a goal of raising USD\$92,000.00 in 2015. This will allow us to meet our expenses for this year, as well as to implement our need for a full-time person in Administration, to be engaged in 2016. Although we are very thankful that one local church raised her support to around USD\$12,500.00, we are disappointed that our receipts from all sources have been only around USD\$36,000.00, which means that we are far from attaining our goal for 2015. This is a matter of deep concern and we turn to the Lord for gracious help.

If you would like to make a donation, visit the "Donations" page on our website (www.pro-rege.net/ds14.htm). There you will find all the information necessary for making your contribution in the USA. Canadian donors, please make your donations at www.irtcsociety.ca. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

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