



## NEWS

### Overflowing with Gratitude as 2019 Comes to an End

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*— Isaiah 11:1

In many parts of the world, Christians celebrate this month with a special emphasis on the coming of the greatest gift mankind could receive: the incarnate living God, Jesus, revealing the Lord's glory, goodness, and grace to us.

How could we not be grateful for the many wonders we have witnessed during IRTC's last 19 years? In this year alone, we've seen record numbers of students and enrollments in all terms, an increase in our student body and in the number of subjects offered, and countless opportunities for further advancement in the teaching of Reformed Theology, which we contemplate for the years to come.

As we previously shared, we have not met our annual budgeted target of \$131,255. In fact, as illustrated by the included graph, due to this year's shortfall in receipts we have had to make significant cutbacks. Nevertheless, since we project an

even greater rate of growth for 2020, our financial needs are likely to be higher still. You can be part of those who make IRTC's expansion possible. Please pray that God will raise up more partners who will commit to participate in this ministry and embrace the challenge of promoting the Reformed worldview to the ends of the earth.

#### IRTC Income vs. Expenses (2019 - US\$)

Revenue Year-To-Date	\$79,067
Expenses Year-To-Date	\$109,150
Net Income Year-To-Date	\$(30,082)

## ARTICLE

### The Benefits of Learning Theology at a Distance

The Bible describes the ministerial formation of a myriad of God's heroes, men and women. Formal and informal academic learning shapes the character of the Christian for ministry in the body of Christ, the church. Since not everyone has time to acquire a degree in person, they can benefit from distance learning in the following areas:

1. Flexibility - students are free to reconcile their careers and school because they are not tied to a fixed time. Most people who choose online learning tend to have other commitments and prefer this mode of learning because it gives them power over how they will schedule their time.
2. Reduced Costs - online education may cost less due to a variety of reasons. For instance, there is no cost to travel.
3. Networking opportunities - online education also gives students a chance to interact with peers from different nations and continents. This often provides unique opportunities for collaboration. At the same time, it makes them culturally sensitive and adaptable.
4. Documentation - all necessary information is stored securely in an online database. This includes documents such as live discussions, training materials and emails.

5. Longer and more frequent instructor/student interactions - students in traditional classrooms may not receive the personalized attention they need to clarify certain concepts. Although the IRTC's classes are currently small, some distance learning institutions have classes that reach hundreds of students. This is not a problem for this type of education because online guided discussions and personal talk time with your teachers and classmates are a feature of online classes.
  
6. Access to expertise - an online college education can give students access to specialized undergraduate and post-graduate courses that may not be available at a local or easily accessible learning institution. For example, at the IRTC we have teachers and staff all over the world: I'm in Japan, others are in the Netherlands, Canada, the United States, Brazil, our VP for Student Affairs is in Cambodia. Students are also scattered across the globe: the Persian Gulf, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Central America, North America, India, Japan, and even some hard-to-reach places in Brazil. I have a master's student who spends most of his time on the high seas! Students strive to study without having to live near the institution. Online classes enable knowledge sharing that helps more people gain access to a high-quality theological education that is not readily available in certain geographic locations.

The Holy Spirit has worked throughout church history to enlighten the minds of Christians, helping them to apply God's word to the church. While this connected world might tempt us into thinking we don't need to rely on others to find the answers we seek, God has graced his body with teachers, and this is something to be thankful for. Any understanding of 1 John 2:27 ("you have no need that anyone should teach you") that dispenses with the role of teachers in Christian ministry is a mistake.

IRTC students: take advantage of the tools you have available to you, such as exposure to major theological disciplines, Bible classes, original languages (Hebrew and Greek), and gather doctrines, ideas and history lessons that provide a broad overview of the controversies and problems facing the church today. Dig into the issues in philosophy, counseling, and worldview which will help you think through questions that are often overlooked but which are nevertheless important. In other words, theological training will give you some ability in your approach to Scripture and its application, but it will also equip you for a lifetime of teaching and church building. The goal is to equip the believer by augmenting and complementing what most churches cannot offer – an intense training in these theological disciplines.

// Dr. Daniel Charles Gomes

## How to Donate

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