



IRTC

ANNIVERSARY EDITION — OCTOBER 2020

Holding Firmly to the Word

It is with great joy that this October we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our International Reformed Theological College! We are thankful to God for invaluable brothers and sisters who offered their gifts and talents for the growth of the Kingdom of Christ, through this cause.

There have been times of battles and victories, and today, to the glory of God, we offer internationally recognized distance education, with students, staff and teachers around the world: Albania, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, France, India, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Portugal, Qatar, Scotland, Senegal, Thailand, and the United States.

Here is a little of our history, told through a timeline and the testimonies of four of our founding members, the Rev. Ralph F. Boersema—the first president of the IRTC and current honorary president, the Rev. Pieter K. Meijer—chairman of the board of directors, Dr. Frans Leonard Schalkwijk—history professor and the Rev. Ulisses Horta Simões—our current president.



Ralph and Lucille Boersema

For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. . . He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:9 ESV)

Dear Instructors, Students, Mentors, and Friends,

In the thanksgiving service held for the inauguration of our college, elder Solano Portela, member of the founding committee and one of the members of the first Board of Directors, exhorted us with a message based on Titus 1:5-9, entitled "The Source of Power".

In the words I direct to you today, twenty years later, I would like to remind you of the third point of his message, which was that it is necessary for the elder to hold firmly to the word. Brothers and sisters, be faithful to the trustworthy Word of God. Encourage one another and all the Lord's people with the liberating message of the Creator and Savior. Strongly refute adversaries with the wisdom revealed in Scripture. Take note of how this revelation is sound doctrine. Only doctrine that is sound is good for both encouragement and for refuting the lies of this world.

That is the reason for the IRTC's existence! It prepares men and women of God, through the means of divine truth, in the context of the local church, working together with faithful elders who disciple students in person.

For twenty years now the IRTC has dedicated itself to passing on this attachment to the Word to our students, who themselves desire to hold on to it ever more firmly. This humble service is carried out in human weakness, but upheld by the power and compassion of the Sovereign. I count it a privilege to participate in this pilgrimage and with all my heart want to encourage all of you, beloved brothers and sisters, to persevere in this divine calling.

I thank God for the efforts of many students that work hard late at night, at dawn, at lunch time, taking

any opportunity they can, and this in a great variety of situations. Remain steadfast!

Mentors, you can make a big difference in the lives of your students! It is clearly noticeable when students have the active support of their local mentors. Thank you, Lord God, for local mentors!

At the same time, I am grateful to the Lord for the self-sacrificing teachers, who are the face of the college in the day-to-day of the students. To put together an online course demands much of the teacher as well as of the administrative team. Teaching a course also requires hours of dedication and an empathetic spirit for the desired upbuilding interaction with the students. I would like all to know how God has granted the teachers and all the brothers and sisters that faithfully work at the IRTC, hearts full of dedication and love. So much so that during the first 4 years none of the

college staff received any remuneration and for more than a decade the gratuities often were received with great delays.

Praise be to God for the many donations that brothers and sisters, organizations and churches have provided for the support of the IRTC! In the last 5 years there have no longer been any delays in compensating our personnel for their labors. I ask the whole community to continue in prayer for our support. There is still a lack of resources to reach the goal for 2020. Without this additional support, it may be necessary to limit some of the College's activities.

Children of God in Christ, persevere in the way that strengthens your hold on the holy message of the Lord!

*Ralph F. Boersema
Former President, current Honorary President of the IRTC
Retired minister and former CanRC missionary in Brazil*

Challenges and Advances

If the Canadian pastor Ralph Boersema, (born in the Netherlands), had not visited the parsonage in the Netherlands where I lived with my wife in 1977, I probably would never have heard about the IRTC. However, that first meeting later led to our working as missionary colleagues for 16 years in northeast Brazil, starting in 1979. After my return to the Netherlands, in 1995, I remained connected with my colleague and with the Reformed and Presbyterian world in Brazil. This contact led to my participation in the IRTC, already in the early years of its existence.

However, my pastoral ministry in a large local Reformed Church in Holland prevented more intense participation for some time. I have served on the Board of Directors for several years. Beginning in 2012, the year of my retirement, I became more involved in IRTC matters. I started teaching a few courses and was elected chairman of the Board of Directors.

While all 20 years have had great and many challenges, especially for the first director/president Rev. Ralph F. Boersema and his wife, sister Lucille (I am their witness) the last few years have shown more advances. We have evolved into a much more mature institution, developed in terms of technology, administration, and academic life, and have added more staff and instructors.

I did some research into the 20 years of the IRTC, with view to the publication of a book, and it became more clear to me how God has used men and women in our college, by means of these challenges and advances, for the good of the students and local churches. I am

thankful to God for granting me the privilege of that meeting in 1977, that later resulted in being able to contribute a little to the further development of the IRTC.

I can say that I was convinced of the value and importance of the IRTC, when in 1999 I was invited to participate in this new project. However, I can also affirm that I became more and more convinced in the course of these 20 years, especially as I became more involved in the cause of the IRTC as an instructor. Giving classes to students in various countries, living in very diverse circumstances, and interacting with them, gave me a clearer vision of the great value of our college. Especially the fact that not all students have been exposed to the Reformed world and the doctrines expressed in its confessions, means much to me. The IRTC is a good tool for spreading Reformed theology and its world view.



Pieter and Alida Meijer

Our college, a confessional and international distant learning institution, serves especially the Portuguese speaking world, propagating Reformed theology, and equipping students to serve in local churches and schools. In this statement I express my vision of the importance of this institution.

Without a doubt there are other international distant education institutions, but I believe that our college has a unique profile, because it is based on the Reformed and Presbyterian confessions, and takes them very seriously as the basis and starting point for learning.

Although the number of students is still below what we desire, the individual attention to each student is a great point of distinction.

I hope that we may continue to serve in this important mission that the Lord of the Church has entrusted to us. Although weak in ourselves, we receive strength from the Holy Spirit, with and through the Word.

*Pieter Koenraad Meijer, ex-Missionary to Brazil,
Emeritus pastor of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,
Chairman of the Board of Directors of the IRTC.*

Looking Ahead to the Future

[An excerpt from the preface to the e-book celebrating the 20th anniversary of the IRTC, to be published soon.]

When, at the founding of the IRTC in 2000, Ralph invited me to participate in the online college of Reformed theology (to teach church history), my heart leaped with joy, as I recognized the importance of utilizing this digital tool for preparing Kingdom workers who are unable to attend classes in person. Since at that time we were already retired and living in the Netherlands, serving in an itinerant ministry (at conferences and schools in other countries), I was able to add this assignment to my agenda.

For many years I coordinated the History Department, currently overseen by Prof. Marcone Carvalho, missionary of the IPB in Santiago, Chile. I am so thankful to the Lord for allowing me to continue to serve, sitting at my desk, reaching brothers and sisters that are working in the harvest throughout God's world. One of these is a captain on a cargo ship in the Atlantic Ocean.

Looking forward, with confidence in the faithfulness of the FAITHFUL ONE (2 Cor 1:9), we know that He will sustain us in the future in the midst of the challenges to come, for Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and will be forever. (Heb. 13:8). Let us learn more and more to live by grace (John 1:16), daily (Is. 50:4) in the fear of the Lord (2 Chron. 19:9). May we never forget to pray for our students (1 Sam. 12:23), so that they don't merely fill their heads with facts that will get them grades, but that we may help them in that which they most desire: a better preparation that enables them for the wonderful work of serving the FAITHFUL ONE, imitating our Master more and more, when and where He thinks best, at this time when time is short, evangelizing while it is still 'the day of salvation' (2 Cor. 6:2) Let us work with a sense of urgency, but in the peace of the Lord. And may each be found faithful (Greek *pistos*)! Each with his/her own talents (Mat 24:46; 25:23).

As members of the covenant of grace, let us renew the covenant with the FAITHFUL ONE saying again: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Josh. 24:15). Also, as a school, for teaching and learning are not only by words, but begin by example. And as gentile pilgrims, let us at the same time take hold of the promise of the FAITHFUL ONE: for the promise is for you and for your children... (This is a promise not only for Reformed believers!), and for all who are far off" (Acts 2:39)

Let us reach them digitally. *Soli Deo gloria!* Amen and amen!

*Frans Leonard Schalkwijk,
Apeldoorn (the Netherlands), Pentecost 2020 A.D.
Former Reformed missionary in Brazil, pioneer, coordinator, and professor at the IRTC (still teaching at 92).*



Frans and Margrietha Schalkwijk

God's Instruments

In his book *De Oratore*, the great Roman thinker, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) wrote: "*Historia magistra vitae est*" (History is the teacher for life.) In summary, our newsletter tells a little of what God has done by means of self-sacrificing men and women who, since before 2000, have been God's instruments for building the history of the IRTC. It pleased our Lord to call some of them to Himself, ahead of the rest of us; nevertheless, others continue in their precious labor.

All of us, while contributing to the teaching and learning process, continue to learn as well. On the occasion of the completion of 20 years, I would like to make a small adaptation to Cicero's phrase: Our Lord

Jesus is our most excellent Master and walking with Him has always been a continual learning process, while He is the One who builds history (Mat. 7:28,29).

May the Lord reward, encourage, and strengthen each director, coordinator, professor, administrator, partner (whether internal or external) and each IRTC student by remembering the past 20 years. Regarding the years ahead, I make Moses' prayer my own: "*Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!*" (Psalm 90:17, ESV).

*Ulisses Horta Simões, 2020 A.D.
President of the IRTC*



Ulisses and Maiza Simões

Support the IRTC

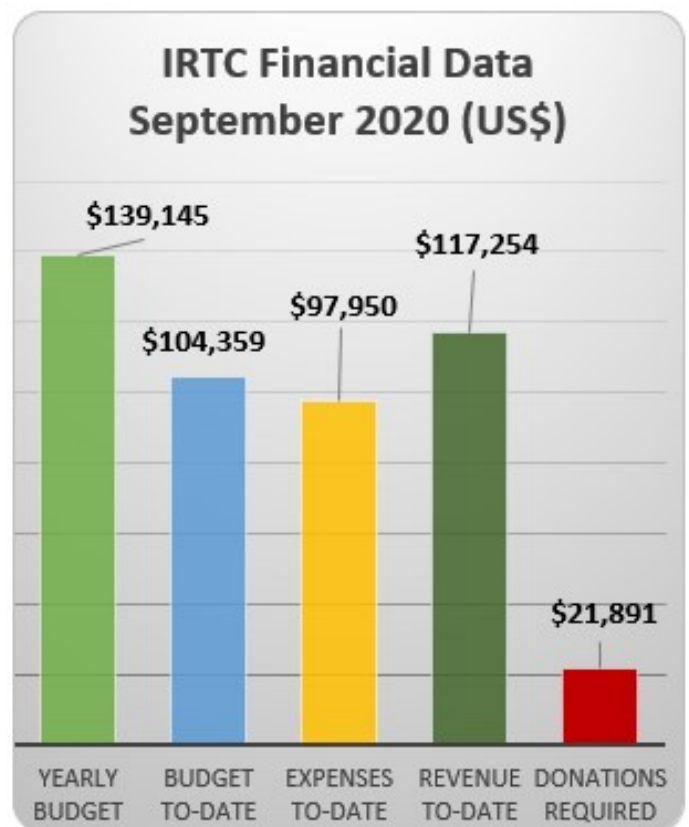
Donations in Canada can be made through the IRTC Society's Web site (http://irtcsociety.ca/?page_id=93) or by cheque made out to the "International Reformed Theological College Society" and sent to:

*International Reformed Theological College Society
PO Box 516
Aldergrove, BC V4W 2T9 Canada*

US & International donations in US\$ can be made by PayPal through our site (<https://irtc.online/donations/>) or by check, made out to the "International Reformed Theological College" and sent to:

*International Reformed Theological College
70 Pace Dr.
Bristol, VA 24201 USA*

Donor Update



IRTC

Please send all feedback, questions, comments and ideas regarding this newsletter to newsletter@irtc.online.

Newsletter Editor: Márcia Gomes
Layout & Editing: David Portela

© 2020 IRTC. All rights reserved.

A HISTORY OF THE IRTC

1998 – RCB COMMITTEE

A committee in the Reformed Churches of Brazil begins thinking about starting a Reformed distance ed college in the Portuguese language.

2000 – RAHE/IRTC FOUNDATION

In a meeting on October 17, in the Swiss Evangelical Church, in São Paulo (Brazil), the Reformed Association for Higher Education is founded, and this association lays the foundation for IRTC in the same meeting. The first president, Rev. Paulo Roberto Batista Anglada is elected. Rev. Ralph F. Boersema is appointed to coordinate the college project.



1999 – GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A group of reformed brothers is formed with the goal of founding a Reformed distance ed theological college; it would be independent, but in the service of the churches of Christ.

2001 – FIRST COURSES

Based in Belem, in the state of Pará, in Brazil, and under the direction of Professor Ralph F. Boersema, the IRTC offers its first online courses in the Bachelor of Theology and the Religious Education Programs. The first Board of Directors was composed of: Cornelius VanSpronsen, pastor in the Canadian Reformed Churches; Francisco Solano Portela Neto, elder in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil; James Olin Coleman, elder in the Presbyterian Church of America (USA); Josafá Vasconcelos, pastor in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil and Pieter K. Meijer, pastor in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Liberated). The first online teaching platform used is *Blackboard*, from North America.

2002 – TELEDUC

The College switches to *TelEduc*, an LMS developed by Unicamp, a Brazilian university.



2004 – IRTC/FITREF IN THE USA

The International Reformed Theological College is incorporated in Bristol, VA (USA) with Rev. Ralph Boersema as its president, and the Brazilian association is closed. The Master of Biblical Studies and the Master of Divinity programs begin to be offered.

2010 – RECOGNITION BY THE IPB (PCB)

The Presbyterian Church of Brazil recognizes the IRTC as a confessionally sound institution for theological training of their students. In the same year, the programs of study offered are restructured to better follow North American standards.



IGREJA
PRESBITERIANA
DO BRASIL

2007 – JAMES OLIN COLEMAN

The pioneer and member of the Board of Directors, Elder James Olin Coleman, is promoted to glory.

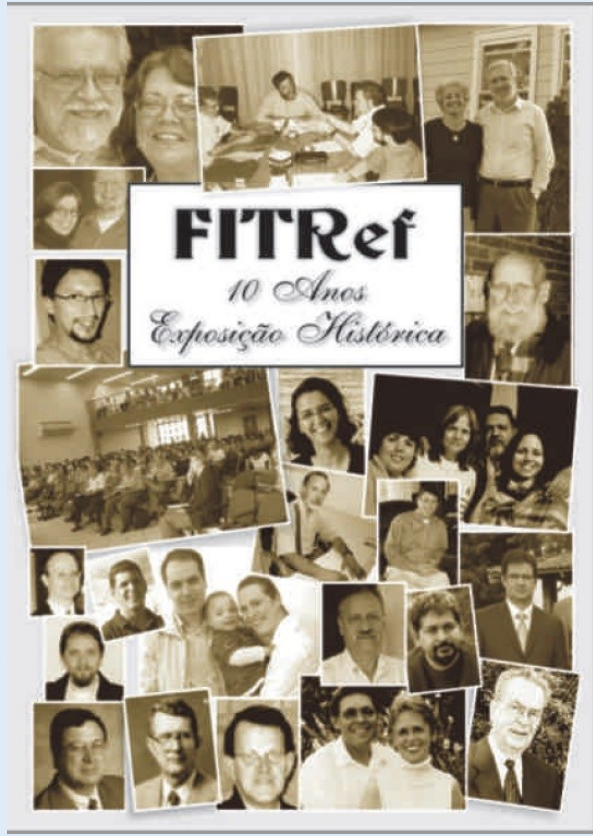
2008 – FIEL PARTNERSHIP

A fraternal partnership with the *Missão Evangélica Fiel* (Faithful Evangelical Mission) begins; as a result of a Fiel Conference in Nampula, Mozambique, a good number of students from that country are added to the IRTC.



2011 – 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The tenth anniversary of the college is celebrated in a special event in Belem, held in connection with a conference organized by the Reformed Association Word of Truth.



2014 – ITSLEARNING

The IRTC switches from *TelEduc* to a Norwegian LMS, *Its Learning*. In Canada, a new support organization is founded, the IRTC Society.



AT THE HEART OF EDUCATION

2015 – SEBASTIÃO GUIMARÃES C. FILHO

The instructor and coordinator of the Department of General Culture and Humanities, Prof. Sebastião Guimarães Costa Filho, is promoted to glory.

2016 – WPLMS

The college develops its first own distance learning platform, based on WPLMS (WordPress).



2019 – PAULO ANGLADA

The former president of the founding association, first academic vice-president, first coordinator of the Department of Exegetical Studies, and instructor, the pioneer Prof. Paulo Anglada, is promoted to glory.



2020 – 20 YEARS!

The coordinator of the Department of Exegetical Studies and instructor, Prof. José João de Paula, is promoted to glory. During this year, the first presidential succession occurs, with Prof. Ulisses Horta Simões as the new president; Prof. Ralph F. Boersema is named Honorary President. The Board of Directors approves the creation of new programs in the field of Missions, to be offered in 2021. The 20th anniversary of the founding of the IRTC is celebrated.

