



IRTC

INTERNATIONAL REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Among the Kurds, Learning to Persevere Faith, Learning and Service in a War Zone

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

Adriana and I have served among the Kurds in northern Iraq for fifteen years. War, persecution and forced displacement have left deep wounds here. Yet we have found a remarkably welcoming people, with an ancient, rich culture and a strong sense of identity. Walking alongside them has been an undeserved privilege.

Our ministry has two main areas: Lúmen Kurden, an NGO serving children, families and refugees, and the planting of a Presbyterian church among the Kurds. We also serve Syrians and Arabs, many of whom have never heard the

gospel clearly explained from Scripture. Through the school, food distribution and emergency aid, we listen to their stories, meet their needs and gradually share the hope we have in Christ.

Faithfulness When There Is Little Visible Fruit

In this largely Muslim setting, following Christ can bring rejection from family and community. Conversion is often seen as a break with one's roots. Our work therefore calls for wisdom, respect and discretion. We seek to act openly, respecting local laws and authorities, while staying close to new believers. Often, their greatest pressures come from within their own families.



Discouragement is another challenge. The work here really is slow. Sometimes years pass without visible fruit. We have learned that our responsibility is to be faithful to God, to Scripture and to our calling, loving people and proclaiming the gospel while trusting Him to change hearts. Despite the challenges, we have seen lives transformed and a small but precious community of faith taking shape.

Training That Sustains Our Ministry

This is the setting in which I am pursuing my master's degree in missiology at the IRTC. What I study finds its way into discipleship, preaching and counselling. A deeper understanding of Reformed theology strengthens my convictions about the central place of Scripture, God's sovereignty in salvation and the nature of the church. Knowing that He builds His church helps us persevere.

Courses in church planting and revitalization, missiology and pastoral theology have been especially valuable. They help me look beyond initial evangelism to building a healthy congregation and training local leaders. We must communicate eternal truths in a culture, language and worldview very different from our own. The emphasis on faithful biblical contextualization helps us do this clearly and sensitively, teaching the foundations of the faith and caring for those facing doubt, suffering and rejection.

Balancing study with family and ministry takes discipline. Distance learning in Portuguese has been invaluable: I can grasp the material more deeply and put it into practice without leaving the field. Adriana and I could not be away for an extended period while I studied on campus. Here, what I learn is constantly tested and applied in daily ministry. I thank God for the teachers and for this training, which has become a firm foundation for our work.

Our Family and Ministry Amid War

In April 2026, we shared how the war was affecting our lives and work. Fear of attacks forced us to suspend activities and rethink our plans. Families, especially children, needed extra pastoral care, while supply

shortages and rising costs added to their hardships. Now, in September, we still make our plans with caution and prayer.

We hope to reopen the school in October. It serves about forty refugee and displaced children whose families bear the scars of war and hardship. Along with literacy, it offers care, food, friendship and hope. Welcoming the children back tells them they have not been forgotten. Even during the closures, we have tried to stay in touch.

At church, we continue to meet on Fridays to hear God's Word, pray and worship. Every service is a reason for deep gratitude. Seeing families taking part and new believers learning encourages us. Our desire is to form a truly Kurdish church: biblical, Reformed, missionary and equipped to proclaim Christ to its own people.

God has also given our family a special joy: our grandson, Miguel Augusto, has been born! Adriana and I are now grandparents. We are thankful that Lucas has completed his postgraduate studies and that Sarah is continuing her professional life while embracing motherhood. Above these milestones, our deepest gratitude is to see our children and their spouses remaining close to the Lord. After years as a missionary family, crossing countries, cultures and languages, seeing our children grown and welcoming a grandson is a precious reminder of God's faithfulness.

We do not know what the coming months will bring, but our calling remains. Our security has never rested in the absence of war or hardship, but in the presence of the One who called us. Please pray for us and for missionary work among the Kurds and throughout the Middle East.

An Investment That Reaches the Field

I want the IRTC's supporters to know that their investment reaches us here. Goodwill and zeal alone are not enough: we need biblical training to disciple new believers and equip leaders with firm foundations. By supporting this training, you help strengthen workers, churches and disciples. Here among the Kurds, theological education is part of the mission itself!

Rev. Giancarlo Wagner da Costa

\$239,630
2026 Budget

77%

\$185,491
Raised (Aug 31)



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