

**Everything I would want to know if I were contributing to the  
InterVarsity Immanuel Approach (IA) training fund**

(New 1/28/24, updated 5/26/24)

**Origin of IA training fund:** It all started with an e-mail from someone who wanted to give us money (I think it was December 2019): “My accountant says I should make an additional charitable donation for this year, and I would like to support the Immanuel Approach in some way.” However, Charlotte and I are not set up as a charitable organization, so I suggested that we find a charitable organization that wanted Immanuel Approach training, and then he could provide financial support to them to provide for Immanuel Approach materials and training. It took a number of months to look into various possibilities, but we eventually discovered that InterVarsity was willing to explore the Immanuel Approach. With many e-mails back and forth between all of the appropriate people, and a few more months of administrative work, the Immanuel Approach training fund and plans for a small beta-test Immanuel Approach training adventure were in place.

**Brief history of wonderful surprises and huge challenges:** When this whole adventure first started, I was picturing two to three years during which I would provide training materials and training events for the first several waves of InterVarsity staff who would be learning about the Immanuel Approach. I figured that I would also provide regular consultation to a few key people, and several rounds of mentoring groups so that we would have a core of InterVarsity staff with at least intermediate training. My hope was that there would be a self-sustaining core of Immanuel Approach InterVarsity staff by the end of these first several years, and that these IA-IVCF staff could then carry on with whatever vision InterVarsity had for including the Immanuel Approach in their ministry. They might ask for an occasional consult, but this would be minimal, and hopefully eventually covered by their own funds. My initial expectation was that we might need \$5,000 to \$10,000 each year for several years, and then hopefully no need for ongoing support from the Immanuel Approach community. Everything went according to plan for the first year – I provided training, consultation, and materials as I had expected, the costs were moderate, and contributions to the IA training fund covered them easily.

The wonderfully good news is that the whole InterVarsity-Immanuel-Approach adventure has exploded far beyond our initial expectations. Every single staff member who experienced the Immanuel Approach during the first wave of training connected with the living, tangible, interactive, personal presence of Jesus and had a powerfully positive experience, and staff started having the same kind of powerfully positive experiences as they facilitated sessions for each other outside of training events. Furthermore, a team of InterVarsity theologians carefully studied the Immanuel Approach and decided that it was completely consistent with scripture. InterVarsity decided to embrace the Immanuel Approach as their primary, first-line prayer model for all prayer ministry, and for the last several years I have received a steady stream of new requests for training, consultation, and materials.

New, exciting, wonderful InterVarsity-Immanuel-Approach developments/endeavors have included:

- Working with Peter Horton<sup>1</sup> to customize my basic training videos and other training materials for ongoing training that he is providing within InterVarsity.

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<sup>1</sup> Spiritual Formation coordinator, and InterVarsity staff person that I work with most closely with respect to all IVCF-IA endeavors.

- Providing a workshop regarding IA at the 2022 annual staff training in Madison. This training was specifically for ministry team leaders and other strategic leaders prior to Urbana.
- Multiple mentoring groups to provide intermediate training.
- Beta-testing IA with students on campuses, as part of preparation for Urbana.
- Working with Peter Horton to prepare ministry aids and other support materials for the IA ministry teams at Urbana and Orlando.
- Working with Peter to train InterVarsity staff to be on the IA ministry team at Urbana.
- Recruiting, screening, prepping, and supporting volunteers from the wider IA community to be on the IA ministry team at Urbana.
- Leading the huge ministry team at Urbana December 2022. 75 InterVarsity staff + 75 IA community volunteers = 150 prayer stations and almost 1,200 IA sessions. This includes final training/practice sessions of staff facilitating for each other during the first day of the conference.
- Peter Horton, and a growing number of others in leadership, would like all InterVarsity staff to eventually be trained in the Immanuel Approach. Current staff is more than 1,700, including volunteers.
- An introduction to the Immanuel Approach (including receiving an IA session for themselves) is now a part of onboarding for all new staff.
- Campus staff increasingly using the Immanuel Approach with their students.
- Recruiting, screening, prepping, supporting, and leading the team of volunteers from the IA community for IA ministry at Orlando January 2024 -- 50 prayer stations, 5 expert troubleshooting consultants available for each ministry block, almost 460 sessions.
- Peter and I developing a "Lite" version of IA especially designed for introducing campus staff and students to the Immanuel Approach.
- Peter is hoping that he and the Spiritual Foundations team can help the culture and identity of the whole organization become more experiential and more relational, and that the Immanuel Approach can be at the center of this effort.

The "bad news" is that these wonderful surprises have brought with them correspondingly huge challenges – the IA-IVCF ventures just described have required much more consultation time, training materials, and hard costs than we had initially anticipated. As described in more detail below, we are especially needing to play catch-up for the huge Urbana and Orlando endeavors.

**Where do the resources from the IVCF-IA training fund go?** Over the past forty years, Charlotte and I have provided a lot of resources as gifts to the larger ministry community (for example, tens of thousands of hours to prepare the thousands of pages of material that we give away from our websites, many gift consultations (especially for international ministry teams that truly can't afford to pay), many

gift sessions, thousands of e-mail consultations, and the hard costs for our websites.<sup>2</sup>) Prior to the IVCF-IA training fund, we have always just covered the cost of our gifts to the ministry community from our personal finances -- Charlotte gets paid for her work as pastor, I have a small private practice, I charge for the several small non-InterVarsity mentoring groups that I run, we charge for our books and DVDs, and we live very simply.

However, the InterVarsity-Immanuel-Approach adventure is such a large endeavor that Charlotte and I are not able to contribute the necessary time, materials, and hard costs without some reimbursement. The Immanuel Approach training fund covers the consultation time, materials, and hard costs that we are not able to just absorb ourselves.

**Websites with no charges/subscription fees:** When I discuss our ministry finances with people, a question that often comes up is, "Why don't you pay for your ministry work by charging a subscription fee for access to all of the fantastic material on your websites?" I realize that this is not *directly* related to the InterVarsity IA training fund, but my perception is that any issue related to overall stewardship competence and conscientiousness will affect people's intuitive discernment when they are deciding where to send their hard-earned dollars in response to the overwhelming number of requests for charitable donations that constantly pour into our inboxes.

So here is the quick summary regarding our decision to not charge for access to our websites: When someone hears about a new ministry resource of some kind, such as the Immanuel Approach, they will be much more likely to explore it and pursue it if they can quickly and easily find good, free information about the new resource. Even with no fee, just needing to fill out a registration form that requires contact information will dramatically reduce the number of people who explore and pursue. I know this is true for me -- if I am exploring some new topic or resource, and all of the websites I find as I begin my research require registration and/or subscription for all of the good stuff, I will often just drop my fledgling exploration into the new topic/resource and move on to one of the many other issues/questions/topics/tasks clamoring for my attention.

In fact, in recent conversations with a business consultant, he mentioned fascinating research results regarding this very phenomenon. As we all know, a very common strategy is for the developer of some new resource to initially offer it for free. Initially, the new video game, or the new software for counting your calories and tracking your exercise, or the new medical information website is free. But then after you have been using the new video game (or software, or website) for a while, and have come to really like it, you get the notice, "for only \$9.99/month, you can continue using our wonderful product." The fascinating finding from research studying this common start-up marketing technique is that, *consistently*, around **90% of users** promptly drop out when new product developers start charging. And these studies don't even talk about the people who will be less likely to ever even try the new product, now that it is no longer free.

Our sense is that the Lord wants us to offer a generous buffet of excellent, easy-access, free introductory material to make it as easy as possible for as many as possible to explore and pursue the Immanuel Approach. (Our hope is that once people really engage with the Immanuel Approach, and discover how profoundly effective and life-giving it is, they will eventually buy a couple of books and a few training

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<sup>2</sup> My rough estimate for the cost of domain names, website hosting, website security, website software, consultation for network directory design, and ongoing tech support over the past 20 years = \$50,000.

DVDs, and maybe even contribute to the InterVarsity IA training fund. But we want to make it as easy as possible for people to get a really good, strong start.)

**Income from books, DVDs, online courses:** Just like not charging for our websites, income from our books and other products is not directly related to the InterVarsity IA training fund. But I'm guessing that at some subtle, intuitive level, many people's internal algebra includes thoughts along the lines of, "Yes, it's certainly reasonable that Dr. Lehman wants to be reimbursed for at least some of the time, materials, and hard costs that he puts into the InterVarsity Immanuel Approach adventure, but there are other causes that need the money more. The Lehmans must be making quite a bit of money on all of those books and DVDs and online courses – they don't really need my support."

In response to this possible internal algebra, a few concrete data points might be helpful. For example, with *Outsmarting Yourself*, I have spent more than 10,000 hours writing, editing, publishing, and managing sales. (This includes work on the first edition, second edition, and digital edition.) After subtracting costs for publishing consultation, proofreading, professional indexing, printing, shipping, and 25% commission for the team that does our fulfillment, we make \$15 for each book sold. We have sold about 6,750 books so far, which multiplied by \$15/book and divided by 10,000 hours = \$10.12/hour for the 10,000 hours invested over the past 17 years since I first started working on *Outsmarting Yourself*.

And the numbers are even worse for the *The Immanuel Approach* (big lion book) and our DVDs. Regarding the big lion book, my perception is that MANY use the free resources from the website, but far fewer buy the actual book. Regarding our DVDs, my perception is that MANY watch the free preview/trailer versions of our live ministry sessions, and find them to be excellent, inspiring intro appetizers for the Immanuel Approach, but very few ever buy any of the actual DVDs.

People are often surprised that sales of our material are so minimal, in light of the many thousands of people around the world who are using the Immanuel Approach. A big piece of the explanation is that most of those who get really excited about the Immanuel Approach, and then actually start providing training, quickly develop their own material. And we actually encourage this, because the Immanuel Approach spreads more quickly and sinks in more deeply when those who provide training make adjustments to help their IA training material be optimally synchronized to their particular cultural setting, to their specific audience, and to their own personal experience. When trainers do this, they are much more comfortable with the material they use and much more enthusiastic regarding the training they provide. The bottom line is that they provide more training, and the training they provide is more effective. The only downside is that they increasingly promote and sell their own material, as opposed to promoting and selling our material.

**No franchise fees or royalties from other IA trainers, writers:** Just like income from our books and other products, franchise fees and royalties are not directly related to the InterVarsity IA training fund. But I was recently talking to a colleague who commented, "I'll bet a lot of people are thinking, '...The Lehmans must be raking in the dough from royalties and franchise fees – they don't really need my support.'" In response to this possible internal algebra, a couple of additional data points might be helpful: 1. We do not receive any franchise fees from the other ministries or individuals providing Immanuel Approach training; and 2. We do not receive any royalties from the written and video material that others have prepared regarding the Immanuel Approach.

Much like questions regarding our websites, one might ask, “So why don’t you require franchise fees from anyone who charges for Immanuel Approach training, and why don’t you collect royalties for written and/or video materials that are clearly based on your work? Then you wouldn’t need to ask people for money.”

The answer is that we are trying to support and encourage these ministries and individuals who are helping to spread the Immanuel Approach. Many of these ministries and individuals are struggling to support themselves and their Immanuel Approach work. If I asked them for franchise fees and royalties, it could make the difference between being able to continue and not being able to continue. My not asking them to send me a percentage enables them to keep doing what they are doing.

**Peter Horton support is different from IA training fund:** As many of you already know, about 40% of Peter Horton’s staff position at InterVarsity is now designated to integrating the Immanuel Approach into every aspect of InterVarsity’s organization, ministry, and identity. And many of you are now regularly giving to provide ongoing support for this portion of Peter’s staff position. However, support for Peter’s staff position is completely different from the Immanuel Approach training fund. As just described in more detail above, the InterVarsity Immanuel Approach training fund provides reimbursement to Charlotte and I for the time, materials, and hard costs that we are not able to just absorb ourselves.

**We try to lead by example:** Just in case this helps with donor morale, Charlotte and I try to lead by example in contributing to the InterVarsity-Immanuel-Approach adventure (discounted fees, time we don’t charge for, materials we don’t charge for, and hard costs we cover ourselves). We try to give at least as much time, materials, and money as the most generous donors from the wider Immanuel Approach community.

**Unusual administrative situation:** As many of you probably already know, each InterVarsity staff member raises the finances for their own position. And InterVarsity has a well-developed, rigorous system in place to provide support for this fundraising aspect of each staff member’s work, including a whole team to provide initial training, ongoing coaching/mentoring, and administrative support. In contrast, independent contractors who work with InterVarsity just complete the agreed-upon task, submit an invoice, and get paid.

In this context, I get to be special (even unique!). If I understand correctly, I am the only contractor who has ever raised the finances to cover the cost of the materials and services he provides. The huge upside of this unusual situation is that it enabled me to quickly get approval for the whole Immanuel Approach training adventure, even in the middle of the COVID pandemic and the huge difficulties that this created for campus ministries such as InterVarsity, including severe financial difficulties. If I had been making a normal contractor proposal: “This is what I would like to provide, and this is what it would cost,” it may never have been approved. And if it had been approved, the process would have been much more difficult, it would have taken a lot longer, and the final Immanuel Approach adventure would have been much smaller.

The downside of being so special is that the well-developed, rigorous system that provides support for staff fundraising is not set up to include contractors. We have jerry-rigged a system just for me, but it is **very** bumpy and inefficient at times, and this has been especially difficult with reduced support-staff

throughout the organization due to Covid-related financial stressors. (To those of you who have been supporting the IA training fund – this is why I sometimes don't learn about a contribution you have made until a year after you have sent it in.) Also, if I totally miss some usual piece of fundraising etiquette, you can safely assume that I simply don't know about it. (Please accept my apologies for any times this has already occurred, or for when it occurs in the future.)

**Delayed discovery regarding 2022 accounting:** Until just recently (final week of December 2023), the last giving update I had received was from early December of 2022. So when I sent in my invoices for fall of 2022 and the big week at Urbana, and InterVarsity paid them in the spring of 2023, I assumed that sufficient 2022 end-of-year donations and early 2023 donations had come in to be able to cover all IA training expenses for our HUGE 2022 Urbana year. But then I got the December 2023 update and checked all the math for 2022 and 2023. I discovered that we had actually finished our huge Urbana year \$12,000 in the red. Unfortunately, when they sent the checks for my 2022 invoices, nobody flagged that sufficient IA training funds had not actually come in.<sup>3</sup> So I did not discover the 2022 deficit until I finally got the December 2023 update and did all of the math for myself. (*Many* hours of tedious accounting! ☹️)

The good news is that 2023 donations have covered all of our 2022 expenses (even including the 170 hours I put into the amazing Urbana adventure -- planning with Peter, preparing materials, recruiting, screening, training/prepping, supporting, and leading the huge ministry team, and follow-up analysis after the conference). The bad news is that more than half of the 2023 contributions were needed to cover the 2022 deficit, and now we have a deficit for 2023. More good news is that we are planning a very light year for 2024, which should help us replenish the IA training fund. And even more good news is that future Urbana and Orlando conferences will require *much* less of my time, which should make it much easier to balance the budget going forward.<sup>4</sup> Also, we will try to adjust our InterVarsity-Immanuel-Approach work going forward to stay within the resources that come in -- if necessary, we will just scale back our IVCF-IA efforts to match the donations that come in for the training fund.

**Long term plan = work myself out of a job:** Finally, my long-term plan continues to be to work myself out of a job with respect to InterVarsity and the IA training fund. I expect that Peter and others will eventually take over more and more of the work of integrating the Immanuel Approach into the ministry and identity of InterVarsity across the country, and that the need for consultation from me will correspondingly decrease. I'm expecting that InterVarsity will eventually be able to just use their general funds to reimburse me for an occasional consultation.

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<sup>3</sup> Just in case you are wondering how this could be possible, IVCF has separate accounting for the IA training fund, but there is not actually a separate bank account. So there was sufficient money in the account from other sources.

<sup>4</sup> As the reader probably already knows, developing a totally new venture, and implementing it for the very first time, always requires *much* more effort.