



DOCTRINE AND ORGANISATION

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Introduction

The current document consists of two parts. It starts with the formulation of our faith and the practical application of it in our church practice and personal life. Second, the organisational structure of ICF is discussed dealing with membership and leadership.

1. Doctrine of ICF Wageningen and its bearing on our character and practice

a. Beliefs and confession

As a community of believers responding to the love of God we wholeheartedly affirm the Biblical truths as they are stated in the **Apostolic Creed** (see appendix). We further hold on to the **IFES Doctrinal statement**:

- The unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Godhead.
- The sovereignty of God in creation, revelation, redemption and final judgment.
- The divine inspiration and entire trustworthiness of the Holy Scripture and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- The universal sinfulness and guilt of all men since the fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
- Redemption from the guilt, penalty, dominion and pollution of sin, solely through the sacrificial death (as our representative and substitute) of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.
- The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and his ascension to the right hand of God the Father.
- The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration.
- The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith alone.
- The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.
- The one holy universal Church which is the body of Christ and to which all true believers belong.
- The expectation of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

b. Character of ICF Wageningen



ICF Wageningen is composed of Christians from diverse cultures, countries, denominations and backgrounds who have fellowship together as the Body of Christ. Through Christ we are connected with each other and with God's world-wide church.

Our interdenominational character allows for unity in diversity, within the bounds of a robust affirmation of the core Biblical truths and ethos as expressed above. All guests are welcome who want to join us in worship and who seek to find the truth about God.

As we are solely dependent on God's grace, we emphasise that the primary effect of salvation is a restored relationship with God. This relationship is the source of God's blessing and of personal and communal renewal.

c. Vocation

A primary goal of ICF is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt 28: 19,20; Mark 1: 15). We want to be a missional community that stimulates people to become and grow as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:23). As an international fellowship, ICF feels called to share the Gospel, hospitality and friendship with international students and other foreigners. Dutch people who want to share in this ministry to internationals are welcome to join. Where possible we seek unity and cooperation with both Dutch and international churches..

We believe in the priesthood of all believers (to intercede for and serve one another) and encourage each other to fulfil our God-given calling through the gifts and talents He has given to each one of us (Rev. 1:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:5 & 9). Recognising that God has given gifts to all His people, ICF wants to make use of and help to develop all of these for His Kingdom. As such we aim for shared leadership, with a balanced distribution of gifts.

d. Meetings

God calls His people together to function as His body (Hebrews 10:25). We are thus devoted to regular meetings where we participate in Biblical teaching, praise, fellowship, Holy Communion, prayer, and in the practice of the gifts of the Spirit and meeting each other's needs. Spiritual formation takes place in Sunday worship services, children's Sunday school, Connect groups, prayer meetings, Alpha courses, marriage counselling, etc. We also organise social activities (lunches, cultural evenings, etc.) where we can meet people in an relaxed way and invite others.

e. Baptism and the Lord's supper

As ICF we believe in God's covenantal relationship with His people (Luke 22:20), and we administer the Lord's Supper and Baptism as sacraments that impart and demonstrate God's grace to His people.

We allow for variety in baptism practices both in terms of infant or confessional baptism, and in terms of sprinkling or immersion. We affirm the Lord's command to baptise new Christians and if applicable their families as a sign of God's covenant, to save us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. ICF is happy to baptise an adult person if that person expresses faith in Christ as Saviour, and is involved in ICF activities. ICF will baptise or dedicate children, if their parents express faith in Christ as their Saviour, promise to raise the child in the Christian faith, and are members.

We practice the Lord's Supper regularly, as we are called to by our Lord Jesus (Luke 22:17-21; 1Cor 10:16 & 21). Thus we invite all those who confess Jesus as Lord and who want to submit their lives to Him to join in the Lord's Supper. We do this in remembrance of Christ's death, being mindful of one another and desisting from its abuse (1 Cor. 11:20-34).

Only a leader who is recognised by our church can administer the sacraments. As there should be order in the church (1 Cor 14:33, 40; Col 2:5) primarily the elders are responsible for supervising and if necessary delegating this work to others.

f. Relationships and marriage

We want to encourage one another in healthy relationships whether single or married. We believe that marriage between a man and a woman uniquely resembles God's relationship with His people. We will bless the marriage between a man and woman, whether single from birth or following the death of a spouse, if both seek the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ and are convinced that it is God's will for them (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14). We emphasise sexual purity in courtship and marriage (1 Thess. 4:3-8) and want to help parents to raise their children in the fear of the Lord.

Marriage involving divorced persons will be considered on a case-by-case basis and be guided by the instructions of Jesus and Paul (e.g. Matthew 19:8-9, Mark 10:10-12 and 1 Cor. 7:10-11).

g. Accountability

We strive to hold ourselves and each other accountable in matters of morality and truth as we seek God's will together. This includes accepting the moral law (from the Old Testament) as it is appropriated in the New Testament (e.g. Matt. 5-7 and 1 Cor.6:9&11). We understand that relationships form the basis for effective involvement in each other's lives. This is expressed primarily through one-on-one relations and other small group forums such as the Connect groups. Being a member of ICF includes a willingness to accept the admonition of those that ICF has recognised as having authority to lead the church.

ICF does not make any claims on personal finances, but views possessions just as any other gift from God.

2. Organisation of ICF Wageningen

a. Membership

ICF aims to be a living part of the body of Christ, in which both members and non-members are stimulated to grow in faith. Membership supports the feeling of belonging, it gives the opportunity to express commitment, many feel it is conducive to growth and it is a way of participating in the direction of the church.

What constitutes membership? A member is someone who has an active faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. We respect the different Christian traditions that people come from. Yet we recognise each other on the basis of the apostolic confession (see annex). A more modern formula of this can be found in the IFES doctrinal basis. Besides this we ask of members that they respect our bylaws as they have been worked out to let things move smoothly

ICF expects of members a willingness to offer their gifts in accordance with their abilities and so serve the ICF community (see Romans 12). ICF members are expected to accept a bible-based authority of all those to whom ICF delegates authority. In this, anyone in a leadership role, is accountable to all ICF members, keeping in mind that church leadership is serving leadership. Members have the right to be informed about the decisions made and issues discussed in the church council.

Due to its special nature as a church for internationals in Wageningen we allow dual church membership. If someone wants to become a member of ICF, but also wants to stay a member of his or her home church, he or she will be asked to inform the home church leadership.

Because ICF is an open community, everyone can attend ICF activities, this openness includes member's meetings, though non-members will not be able to vote. It is not necessary to be a member of ICF to become involved in the organisation of activities. Exceptions are 1. tasks that have directly to do with prayer and Bible teaching 2. positions in which persons are given final responsibility: these should be fulfilled by members that agree with the mission, vision and doctrines of ICF.

These include the tasks of elders, deacons, connect group leaders, prayer team members, service leaders, worship leaders and members of the pastoral team. People who are not able to regularly visit ICF because they have temporarily moved from Wageningen and its surroundings or are not in the Netherlands part of the year because of studies or work can stay members, but should inform the church council about their specific situation. If the period away is more than 4 months, a member will lose the right to share in decision-making processes.

If concern arises about the lifestyle or opinion of a member, the church council is responsible to deal with it in a sincere way and with a listening attitude of love and care. ICF wants to be clear about its vision, mission and doctrines, but also realises life encompasses much more than can be grasped by any set of rules. In such cases we have to remember that we are a diverse community, in which many different opinions are present.

If a member no longer attends activities (e.g. because of departure to another location or church or chooses not to be part of a Christian community), he/she will be approached by an elder, deacon or Connect group leader (if possible in person, otherwise by email, phone, ..), to talk this over and see whether membership should continue. On the specific request of a member or if we do not hear from a member in the period of 6 months in spite of efforts to reach him, membership can be terminated.

Visitor registration

We understand that the situations of people are diverse. Some persons are only very temporarily in Wageningen, or they are still considering which stand to take regarding the Christian faith and the Church. We offer the possibility to register as a guest member. This way people are known to us and we are able to support them if needed. Guest members are allowed to vote on a members meeting.

b. Leadership

i. Tasks and responsibilities

We believe some are called by Christ to serve the church in servant leadership. The leadership of ICF is the church council, which consists of elders and deacons. Leadership in the church means serving God and others. The church council as a team, to the best of their abilities, is responsible for the operationalisation of the ICF vision and mission building on the doctrinal principles outlined above. This includes:

- Ensuring that members are informed about issues discussed and decisions made in church council meetings
- Consulting the members as a rule twice a year in a members meeting

Elders and deacons each have their specific tasks in the ICF community. Members of the church council do participate in ICF activities to keep in tune with what is happening among members. Elders and deacons should meet the criteria for church leaders that are given in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 2

Elders are responsible for overseeing the spiritual well-being of the members and the calling of the church. This includes:

- Final responsibility in leading ICF
- Pastoral care for the community as a whole
- Safeguarding the doctrinal basis and vision and mission of ICF
- Upholding discipline and solving conflicts
- Having the sacraments administered (Holy communion and Baptism)
- The blessing of marriages and the leading of funeral services
- The preaching and worship in the Sunday service
- Training/discipleship
- Supporting the deacons in their more practical tasks

Deacons are leading specific clusters and are responsible for:

- Directing activities in their cluster in a spiritual fashion
- The implementation of decisions, either made by the elders, church council or within their own clusters
- Striving for harmony among the different clusters
- The continuation of the activities within the cluster (in cooperation with the team of coordinators)
- Attending to material needs within ICF.

If ICF makes use of the assistance of a pastor he will be part of the church council, serving the community at the same level of authority as the other elders.

ii. Appointment

Elders and deacons will be appointed for a limited term which can vary from 1 year to 4 years. These flexible terms facilitate the participation of candidates with short time period in Wageningen, but also ensures continuity and accountability. After 4 years of service a person should rest for 1 year before he/she can serve again as elder or deacon. In special cases a person may be asked to continue for a longer period, but this should be the exception.

In finding new council members the following protocol will be followed:

- Vacancies will be announced and names can be suggested by the congregation. ICF only considers candidates for leadership tasks that fully agree with the mission, vision and doctrines of ICF.
- The church council (elders + deacons) prayerfully, chooses a candidate and ask for his/her availability

At this stage it is important to ensure a balance of long- and short-termers, and of Dutch and internationals. It is desirable to have at least 2 persons that can commit themselves for long term (3 or 4 years) and 1 person that commits for short term (less than 2 years). And it is required to have at least one person with a non-Dutch passport in the team.

- The candidate is proposed to the church and members can bring up objections.
- In case of no valid objections this person will be appointed.

If a member of the church council shows reprehensible behaviour, the whole church council should be involved in the decision making regarding this member. A 'time-out' has to be given to someone to create room for a change and to prevent subjective or rash decisions being taken. . Given their responsibilities, elders cannot be outvoted by deacons in issues of spiritual leadership. In case there is a persistent disagreement within the church council, or between the members and the church council, ICF will seek help from a trusted independent leader outside of ICF.. The advice will be followed if in line with the ICF vision and mission.

The calling to a position of leadership is an opportunity for members to use their gifts and talents to serve the community according to the needs that arise in ICF. Leadership training will be made available for all new leaders in ICF.

iii. Gender-specific tasks

Within the ICF community all tasks can be performed by both men and women, except the preaching in the Sunday service, which we limit to men. This is a pragmatic choice and continues the practice in ICF over the past decades. We know that within the ICF community there is a diversity of opinions. ICF will respect all convictions. For the church council we aim for gender balance.

c. Complaints and disputes

Complaints and disputes will be handled in line with Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:15-20.

3. Evaluation of this document.

We desire and will have to continually learn from new experience. Therefore this document needs to be evaluated every other year.

Appendix 1. Apostolic Creed:

We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. AMEN.