

CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF FREE EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Preamble

The International Federation of Free Evangelical Churches (IFFEC) is a fellowship of faith and service consisting of federations of free evangelical churches. The IFFEC has its origin in the great revivals which took place in Europe and other parts of the world in the nineteenth century. In most of the countries involved there existed State churches where membership was constituted by citizenship in connection with infant baptism. Those who were converted through the revival found it impossible to take the Lord's Supper with a majority of unbelievers. Hence they began to celebrate the Lord's Supper at meetings restricted to believers. As the next step in this development they founded local churches in which each member was accepted upon his voluntary application on the basis of his personal faith in Jesus Christ. For these churches the Bible as the Word of God was the only and authentic basis of doctrine and conduct. Every church member was free to read the Bible individually and to interpret it "with a good conscience" and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Very soon fellowships on the national level were established among churches united by these convictions.

In Central Europe links with Christians of the same vision were also established beyond national boundaries at an early stage. In this way the beginnings of the IFFEC go back to 1834 and to Bern, Switzerland, in the course of subsequent developments, federations of such churches were founded in the north, the south and the south-east of Europe as well as, at a later time, in the USA and Canada. In spite of geographical separation these federations established a working fellowship with each other. As a result the IFFEC was officially founded in Bern in 1948. It was a characteristic feature of all federations involved to be active in foreign missions, resulting in the development of young churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Regardless of existing differences among the situations of various countries and the historical origin, development and traditions affecting the individual federations, all member federations of the IFFEC aim at practicing the unity of the Church as the Body of Christ and at the propagation of the biblical truth concerning the church of believers.

At the same time the name of the IFFEC states the most important principles governing the free evangelical churches everywhere: They are free inasmuch as

membership in these churches necessitates a free decision by the individual and as these churches conduct their internal life as well as their public ministry free from any influence by the state.

They are evangelical inasmuch as their faith, doctrine and conduct are guided by the message of the Bible. The personal faith in Jesus Christ, in obedience to the Word and the Will of God, is the only condition of membership in his Church.

They are churches inasmuch as Jesus Christ is present through his Word and Spirit, gathering and commissioning them and they acknowledge that all believers and only believers are members of the church. In order to foster the co-operation between these churches in the whole world to the honor of God, the IFFEC has agreed on the following constitution:

Article 1: Name

The federation is called International Federation of Free Evangelical Churches (IFFEC).

Article 2: Basis

The IFFEC is a spiritual and organizational fellowship of federations of churches in which personal faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Lord, according to the Bible, the Word of God, is the only condition of membership in the local church, as the fundamental principles of the free church are described within the preamble. Beyond this point, the autonomy of the individual federations and their local churches is in no way restricted by membership in the IFFEC.

Article 3: Tasks

- (1) of furthering mutual understanding of its member federations and to strengthen them,
- (2) of propagating the biblical truth concerning the church of believers in the sense of Article 2
- (3) of taking appropriate public and private steps in common causes and needs.

Article 4: The Executive Bodies

The executive bodies of the International Federation are the General Assembly and the Executive Committee including the President and the General Secretary.

Article 5: The General Assembly

- (1) The General Assembly is the conference of delegates of all member federations and as such the highest constituted authority. It decides on all questions of basic significance. It issues statements on religious and moral questions of public life if warranted by a given situation. It decides on the membership of federations within the IFFEC, the election of the members of the Executive Committee, the budget, the appointment of auditors and the acceptance of their report. It accepts the report of the Executive Committee and decides on changes of the Constitution.
- (2) Member federations up to 15.000 members are entitled to send at the cost of the federation concerned two delegates to the General Assembly; up to 30 000 members, three delegates; over 30.000 members, four delegates. In addition each member federation shall also be entitled to one youth delegate and one mission delegate. The General Secretary is not counted in the quota of delegates from his federation. Member federations can be represented at the General Assembly by regional delegates according to Article 9 (3).
- (3) The General Assembly meets every four years at a place and time to be determined by the Executive Committee. Furthermore, the General Assembly may be convened by the Executive Committee at any time when problems of extreme urgency have to be decided.

Article 6: The Executive Committee

- (1) The Executive Committee implements the decisions of the General Assembly, prepares the meetings of the General Assembly and conducts its current business. The Executive Committee represents the IFFEC in external relationships. It is also available to the member federations for

spiritual and practical counsel. It pursues the common international interests of the IFFEC. Between meetings of the General Assembly the Executive Committee acts as its representative. It reports to the General Assembly on its activities.

- (2) The Executive Committee consists of a minimum of eight and a maximum of ten members, i.e., the President, the General Secretary, an international Youth Representative an international Mission Representative and a minimum of four and a maximum of six additional members. All members of the Executive Committee should, if possible, represent different member federations and have leadership responsibilities in them. The General Secretary is not to be counted as a representative of his member federation. The President serves as chairman of the Executive Committee.
- (3) The members of the Executive Committee are elected by the General Assembly for four years, subject to re-election with the provision that the President may succeed himself only once. If the office of a member of the Executive Committee in his own federation terminates between General Assemblies then the Executive Committee shall be authorized to nominate a replacement to serve until the next General Assembly.
- (4) Normally the Executive Committee holds one working session per year, if necessary. The travel- and accommodation-costs shall be paid by the IFFEC. Member federations may reimburse the treasury for said expenses. Exceptions to this rule can be made by the Executive Committee as is deemed necessary.
- (5) The General Secretary is responsible for the regular business of the IFFEC. He maintains communications between the member federations by appropriate means including travel within the budget limitations. He receives from the member federations regular reports about their activities. He prepares the sessions of the Executive Committee and is responsible for their minutes. He is responsible for the implementation of decisions taken, the correspondence and the finances of the IFFEC.

Article 7: Meetings of the General Assembly

- (1) The President opens the meetings of the General Assembly and is responsible for its orderly constitutions. Apart from this point, the assembly decides on its own order of business. If the President is absent, the General Secretary takes his place.

- (2) One year before the General Assembly the General Secretary sends written invitations, including the agenda, to the member federations. No later than six months before the assembly each member federation communicates to the General Secretary the names and addresses of its delegates as well as an exhaustive report on the state of the federation concerned during the past four years. Not later than one month before the assembly the General Secretary sends all prepared papers to the leading bodies of the member federations as well as to the individual delegates. The official conference languages are English and German.
- (3) Recommendations by member federations for items to be included in the agenda have to be filed in writing with the General Secretary not less than six months before the assembly. The Executive Committee shall prepare recommendations on these items and present them to the General Assembly. In major matters and in matters of policy recommendations proposed by delegates during the General Assembly, must first be submitted in writing to the Executive Committee. It also has the right to make proposals, recommendations and clarifications on its own authority.
- (4) Business meetings of the Federation may be called by the Executive Committee two years following any General Assembly.

Article 8: Membership

- (1) Any federation of churches may apply for membership in the IFFEC if it supports and practices the principles stated in Article 2. An application should be filed with the General Secretary not later than six months prior to a General Assembly. The Executive Committee shall examine the application and submit it with its recommendation to the General Assembly which shall vote on it. A copy of the constitution of the federation concerned, as well as a written report on its origin, historical development, present ministry and future prospects should be submitted to the Executive Committee, together with its application for membership.
- (2) If there is in a given country only a single local church in the sense of Article 2, Sentence 1, it may apply for associated membership in the IFFEC as long as the formation of a national federation of churches in

that country is still pending. Sections (1), (4) and (5) of this Article will apply correspondingly.

- (3) In exceptional cases the Executive Committee may grant tentative membership to a federation, with the final decision to be made by the General Assembly.
- (4) Each member federation shall pay an annual membership fee to be fixed by the General Assembly for every four year period and based on multiplies of 1.000 members in that federation.
- (5) If a member federation ceases to follow the principles of Article 2, membership in the IFFEC of such federation shall be terminated by a decision of the General Assembly.

Article 9: Regional Associations

- (1) Federations of churches which meet the requirements of the guidelines of Article 2 can join together to form Regional Associations which pursue the tasks of the IFFEC according to Article 3.
- (2) The formation of Regional Associations must be approved by the General Assembly.
- (3) Any Regional Association is entitled to send to the General Assembly at their own cost two delegates, plus one youth delegate and one mission delegate, provided that those delegates have been so commissioned by member federations, which are not otherwise represented.

Article 10: International youth work

- (1) In order to foster international fellowship among young people, a Youth Committee shall normally hold a working session once every year. The committee consists of six members to be proposed by the youth delegates of the General Assembly and to be elected for a four year term by the General Assembly. They shall act as representatives of the youth work of all member federations. The chairman is to be appointed by the Executive Committee.

- (2) The General Secretary is an ex-offici member of the Youth Committee; he is not included with elected members under Article 9 (1). The chairman is to be appointed by the Executive Committee.
- (3) Travel- and accommodation-costs for the members of the Youth Committee will be as defined in Art. 6 (4).
- (4) The Youth Committee shall in principle assume financial responsibility for all international youth activities which it initiates.

Article 11: International Mission Work

- (1) In order to foster international cooperation among federation members, a Mission Committee shall normally hold a working session once every year, if necessary. The committee consists of six members to be proposed by the Executive Committee after a hearing in the Mission Committee, and to be elected for a four year term by the General Assembly. They shall act as representatives of the international mission work of all member federations. The chairman is to be appointed by the Executive Committee.
- (2) The General Secretary is an ex-offici member of the International Mission Committee; he is not included with elected members under Article 10 (1).
- (3) Travel and accommodation costs for the members of the International Mission Committee will be as defined in Article 6 (4).
- (4) The International Mission Committee shall in principle assume financial responsibility for all international mission activities which it initiates.

Article 12: Regulations

- (1) Decisions shall, whenever possible, be taken unanimously. If unanimity cannot be reached, a three-quarters majority shall be sufficient for general business. Elections to office shall be held by secret ballot, and the highest number of votes shall be sufficient for election.

- (2) In each executive body of the IFFEC a simple majority of its members shall constitute a quorum.
- (3) If a member federation makes a recommendation to change this constitution, such motion shall be treated as general business as provided by Section 1, Sentence 2.
- (4) A decision to dissolve the IFFEC can only be taken by a fourth-fifths majority of the votes cast at an extraordinary General Assembly convened for this purpose.

This Constitution was accepted at the General Assembly of the International Federation of Free Evangelical Churches at Cap Sounion, Greece, on September 25, 1978, to be effective immediately.

Amendments were made at the General Assemblies of IFFEC at:

- 1. **Hilterfingen, Switzerland, 1982**
 - Article 9, Paragraph 1, Sentence 2

2. Jönköping, Sweden, 1986

- Article 6, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1,
- Article 7, and an additional Paragraph 4.

3. Kristiansand, Norway, 1994

- Article 5, Paragraph 2, Sentence 2 and last Sentence
- Article 6, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1
- Article 9, (1) (2) and (3), Regional Associations (new)
- Article 10, Paragraph 1, last Sentence
- Article 11, (1) (2) (3) and (4), International Mission Work (new)

Oslo/Mjøndalen, January 17, 1995

The General Secretary