

Affirmation from Delegates to Define the Characteristics of an ICOC Church

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NEED TO MEET/OR PROBLEM TO SOLVE

Before we describe our governance or processes for resolving conflict, we must first establish three basic guiding principles for churches in the ICOC. These principles are helpful in deliberation for churches that are a.) “in question” with our family of churches, or b.) being considered to be added to our ICOC family.

AFFIRMATION

1. **Cooperation (Unity)** – Besides sharing a doctrinal unity around fundamentals such as salvation and discipleship, cooperation means collaboration and having a functioning presence in the immediate regional family of church gatherings, such as leadership meetings and regional activities. Cooperating means shared involvement in training, evangelizing, preaching, teaching, and pastoral care for the region. It means engaging in the process of peer review and developing a unified understanding of topics that may become complex. Topics may include but are not limited to the following: dating, the role of women and diversity, or who may join or remain a part of the regional family of churches, and thus the ICOC fellowship at large. It means building a godly and unified regional family of churches together (Eph. 4:16). It means publicly identifying one's congregation as part of the ICOC fellowship of churches and readily welcoming members from other ICOC churches into the local fellowship.
2. **Contribution (Giving)** – Contribution means financial donations beyond local needs, such as regional, multi-regional, and worldwide giving to programs like Disciples Today, HOPE *worldwide*, and mission societies, both international and domestic. “Giving” means voluntarily and generously helping to build together for missions, future church plantings, and leadership training and development (2 Cor. 8:3).
3. **Connection (Relational)** – Connection, from local to regional, from multi-regional to global, adheres to a relational worldview that each “autonomous” church is part of a whole, with the potential for biblically loving and dynamic relationships that unify God's

people. Connection means participating in a hospitable give-and-take with the family of churches within the geographical region and beyond. Regional Family Chairmen (RFCs) should set an example of association regionally, multi-regionally, and internationally. A measurement of connectedness and association is determined by attendance and involvement in regional, multi-regional and international engagement, such as conferences, retreats, meetings, decision making, and mission plantings, to name a few. Joining or remaining linked to the ICOC means that when relational conflict arises between disciples within a regional family, a mutually agreed-upon process shall help bring about healing and spiritual transformation for all the parties (1 Cor 1.10). Connectivity requires moments when we set aside our interests for the sake of the greater good of the relationship.

These three underlying tenets, Cooperation, Contribution, and Connection, should start the discussion regarding churches “in question” and if they are, or would be, a good fit within a particular regional ICOC family.

OLD PROCESS/or STRUCTURE

1. Individual Regions have been developing their own process of adding or discipling churches
2. Individual Regions have had no clear process of adding or discipling that would unite them with other ICOC regions

WHY THIS IS BETTER

1. Clarifies our values
2. Does not judge others' salvation
3. Avoids conflicts down the road
4. Provides a structure for dialogue with a church in question