

Introduction: the growth of the tree

The year 2018 was a special year with many blessings. Earlier, God had shown to the church leadership led by pastor Coen Legemaate, that ICF should grow like a tree. Grow like roots: deeper in Him. In the trunk: the main Sunday service in which the Gospel is proclaimed publicly. And the branches: the different ministries, outreach projects and the homegroups where the fruits are visible. That is why the church council decided to invest heavily in these branches. ICF is here in Rotterdam to show the Kingdom through the fruits of the branches. It is wonderful to see that the Lord has fulfilled many of ICF's intentions. Below is a report of the growth of the trunk and branches.



Above: the trunk with many of its branches; this was part of the presentation at membership meeting

The trunk of the ICF tree

1. ICF church members and visitors

The growth in ICF became visible in an increase in church members and visitors on Sunday services and other activities. ICF now has 207 adult members, 140 children and around 100 regular visitors. On an average Sunday there are 350-400 people in the service including children. More than 20 new members were added in 2018; almost all of them have become active in a team or participate in an activity. ICF sees with gratitude that the youth club is growing fast. There are around 35 teenagers every Friday night. They often bring their friends, including non-Christians. The children's club is even larger with around 100 children who receive Bible education at their own level every Sunday. (In addition, the crèche provides care for 10-20 babies and toddlers.) The children's clubs are divided into 6 groups by age. They play an important role in religious education because many parents have little experience with it. In 2018 there were 2 wedding services and 13 new children were born in ICF families.



Pastor Coen Legemaate during a wedding service and wedding party of African ICF members

2. ICF leadership expanded with church workers

With over 400 members and visitors and the ambition to reach more people in Rotterdam, the work load became too heavy for a single pastor. The church council decided to recruit a church worker for 32 hours. In mid 2018, an ICF couple with an international background were appointed as church workers in ICF. They returned to the Netherlands after three years in the Congo. They started their work in October. Claude is a theologian, teacher and musician and comes from Congo. He is primarily appointed for education, pastoral care and leadership for the African community within the church. Corina worked as a diplomat for almost 25 years and has a lot of international and management experience. She is appointed for pastoral care, support for the various teams and for fundraising.



On the left: church workers Claude and Corina (in the back) receive many ICF visitors at home

The branches of the ICF tree

3. Intercultural community of Africans, Kurds, Latinos etc

ICF is an intercultural church and has members and visitors of around 40 different nationalities. In the service there is usually synchronous translation into Kurdish, Spanish, Romanian, Arabic and sometimes other languages. In addition, ICF has three ministries to reach specific groups and to build their faith: among Africans, Kurds and Spanish speakers. The goal is to give people space to pray and study the Bible in their own way in addition to the joint services. Culture and language have a big influence on how people pray, believe, praise God and read the Bible. That is why ICF promotes the cultural identity of believers. At the same time, ICF strives for unity in diversity by working together as much as possible, and by making a good cultural mix in the Sunday services and the composition of the teams.

The Kurdish ministry is led by Home for Kurds (HfK) under the leadership of (elder) Faraidoun Fouad. Last year HfK reached many new Kurdish people again. An investor bought the Bethelkerk building at the end of 2018 for the work of HfK. It is now becoming easier to organize activities and to care for Kurdish people who live far outside of Rotterdam. Church services in Kurdish are now weekly in the Bethel church on Sunday afternoon. They are well visited by 30-40 people. There are also Bible study groups and many other activities. In 2018, the leadership of the national Christian Reformed Churches examined the Kurdish leader Faraidoun Fouad. He now has official authority to preach, to baptize and to hold the Lord's Supper. This is important because it increases Faraidoun's legitimacy outside the ICF and makes the work easier. Many Kurds are afraid of being baptized among non-Kurds. They often do not know the ICF well, but they do know Faraidoun. In addition, it is important for Kurdish believers that they can celebrate the sacraments in their own language and culture.

In the photos on the next page, the Kurdish leader Faraidoun Fouad in action: on the left in the Bethel church at the Lord's Supper and on the right at a baptism during an ICF Sunday service with Coen Legemaate.



The Spanish-speaking group led by Johan Vilamil from Colombia consists mainly of people from Latin America. This group was set up in 2018, is running well and is stable with around 10 participants. Most people come true. The focus is on discipleship and Bible knowledge. The group has a clearly reformed character and sees itself as very different from the (numerous) Spanish speaking Pentecostal communities in the Netherlands.

On the right:
 Johan Vilamil (with apron) and the group of Spanish speakers. Johan prepares their spiritual food but can also cook a good meal



Participation in the African Ministry has increased, led by church worker Claude Mushikangondo. Every week 10-15 people come to the Prayer and Fellowship meeting on Saturday afternoon. They often come together for birthdays or parties for new born babies. The group consists of approximately 40 adults; the women in the group in particular are very active. The unity is growing as well as the mutual involvement. When someone is sick or getting married, the members are supporting each other. In 2018, a group of African women came to ICF who are victims of human trafficking. The process of healing a traumatized past is difficult but it helps the women to experience fellowship and mutual care. One of the women received education in 2018 to be baptized in January 2019. She often takes other women to church with her. The

culture in the group is African but the participants are often of non-African descent because the English language makes it accessible to everyone.



Above: African Ministry members celebrate the 40th birthday of one of the Nigerian sisters

ICF no longer has a Chinese group like it had before, but it does cooperate with the Chinese church led by Anton and Lydia Qin. In 2018 ICF considered to organize something for the Chinese members and visitors of ICF, but they indicated that they consciously opt for integration into the broader (multicultural) community of ICF and see no need for meetings in their own language.

4. Evangelization and outreach activities

Below are a number of activities in the field of evangelism and outreach to unbelievers. Some are fully or partially ICF projects; for other projects, ICF is not responsible but does provide support, including through the involvement of ICF members and the ICF pastor. ICF also tries to actively share experiences in the network of initiatives and promote collaboration.

House of Light pilot phase in Rotterdam / Tarwewijk area: Since September 2018, visitors to the House of Hope (diaconal project) have come together on Sunday for a low-threshold service led by pastor Coen Legemaate. There were 18 visitors to the first meeting, 16 of which had no church ties at all. Some visitors are not yet ready to give their lives to Christ, but they are clearly on the right track. The group of participants has grown slowly. They start to form a community and begin to care for each other. People are touched by the Word of God, the faith talks, the prayers and mutual love. Visitors and leadership always eat together at the beginning of the service. After the sermon, the message is discussed in small groups.

Heart for West in Rotterdam West: this is the missionary part of Thuis in West (TiW), a diaconal project that was started in 2012. The project built on the decline and closure of the Christian Reformed Church Rotterdam West, in 2009. The small congregation that remained wanted to maintain a presence in the neighborhood. Heart for West falls under ICF; staff are ICF members, and the ICF pastor provides advice and coaching. Financially Thuis in West and Heart for West are independent of ICF. TiW focuses on the community in the Middelland district and organizes all sorts of activities during the week, such as lessons in the Dutch language, a coffee morning, playing afternoons, homework supervision, etc. In 2018 Thuis in West was given a

new home for the activities with adjacent living space for a community; this immediately gave a big boost to activities. In the context of the outreach by Heart for West, there is now a low-threshold service every two weeks on Sunday led by neighborhood pastor Cees van Breugel. The number of visitors is growing; there are now around 60. Most of them never came to a church. A number of visitors have a different faith such as Islam or Hinduism, but are very interested in Jesus Christ. Heart for West also organizes Alpha courses, Bible studies, a children's Bible club and offers pastoral assistance to individual visitors.

ICF North is a new church plant that was started at the request of ICF Rotterdam. It is not actually part of ICF Rotterdam, but ICF regards her as the little sister by supporting her where necessary. The desire for a sister on the other side of the river Maas came from the expansion of the area where ICF visitors and members come from. This geographical expansion makes it more difficult to evangelize 'in the neighborhood' and experience fellowship nearby. ICF reasoned that, if there were a similar church in North Rotterdam, ICF Rotterdam would be able to focus more on the South of the river Maas. The aim is for ICF Noord to form a true missionary church community focused on the Crooswijk district (Rotterdam Noord-Oost), with a service which is tailor made to the needs of that district. They will be held in the church building of the Christian Reformed Church on Noordsingel in Rotterdam North. ICF Noord has the same missionary, multicultural DNA as ICF Rotterdam. But the precise approach that fits these neighborhoods is still developing. ICF pastor Coen Legemaate helps Fred Kappinga, the pastor of ICF Noord, with advice and coaching. ICF members sometimes step in with practical help.



Above: Fred Kappinga, pastor ICF Noord in action; and his multicultural team during the dedication service

Alpha course: ICF organizes an Alpha course twice a year under the experienced leadership of Martin van Heerde; this was also the case in 2018. Through this program, more than 10 people were reached in 2018 with the gospel and personal testimonies of believers. A few of them were subsequently baptized and / or became members of ICF.

Missionaries from ICF abroad: Two couples have been formally sent on mission by ICF; they still worked in their mission area in 2018, respectively Senegal (Muslim population) and New York (among Orthodox Jews). In addition, there are ICF members who take the initiative themselves to go on mission. This was also the case in 2018. Even though they do not have a formal ICF mandate, they go with the support of ICF members.

5. Organizational structure for a streamlined tree

ICF improved the structure of its own organization in 2017-2018. The church council consisting of 4 elders, 4 deacons and the pastor, spent relatively a lot time on operational matters. A new streamlined organization was therefore developed. Staff members (coordinators) have been appointed who manage and support around 25 different teams, such as children's work, kitchen team, fixit team, sound, beamer and music teams, welcome team etc. In this way the church council created more time to discuss matters of faith, vision development, and leadership issues such as the appointment of church workers. This makes it possible to continue growing without getting stuck. The number of activities expanded further in 2018, supported by active participation of (new) members. The ICF church choir made a come-back for example. The Home Groups (i.e. the groups for Bible study and fellowship during the week) were restructured where needed. We are grateful that participation in these groups is stable and even increasing slightly. More than 120 ICF members / visitors participate in a Home Group. The participation of ICF members is generally good. It remains a challenge to divide the tasks evenly.

6. Diaconia

ICF is happy that it can assist its members and visitors who go through difficult times, with practical and financial help. The team of deacons is blessed to see God operating in the lives of these people. In the past year a number of them managed to stand on their own feet again; a number of them also received a residence permit. (Immigrants without residence papers often need diaconal support). In 2018 the diaconia was generously supported by the municipality (see financial annual report for more details). ICF is also grateful for the solidarity and contribution of the Christian Reformed Church congregation of Oud-Bijerland. In December this congregation donated 45 Christmas packages to hand out.

For more information about ICF developments: write to pastor@icfroterdam.nl or to churchworkers@icfroterdam.nl