

You have probably never heard of Linus Torvalds but 80% of you here today probably have his product in your purse, pocket, or home. All Android phones (Samsung, Galaxy Google, Motorola), most smart TVs, streaming devices, routers, networking devices, industrial robots, and home automation devices use this software.



In 1991, he could have become very wealthy if he had sold his software. It was just what companies do, it is business.

- But he did something unheard of, he released his software for free. But even bolder, he asked other programmers to improve it and gave them free access to change the code.
- 'Open source' software has become popular.
- Today, only 2% of his original Linux code remains. 98% of the software was developed by volunteers who simply want to improve it.
- What a great idea: if programmers work together without restrictions, they can make a better product.
- Linus still approves of all changes.

**'That they will all be one.'**

*Vision for 2026*



Today, the Lord has put upon my heart an important message for CIC, the vision for 2026.

- If you are a guest today, there should be some spiritual meat for you to chew on.

Today, we will see that ...

- Jesus prayed that the world would believe in Him when His people live in unity.
- CIC's future depends on us moving from just 'getting along' to truly loving and serving together.
- We are better when we work together.

## **1. The Picture: Open Source & CIC.**

I believe that 'open source' software is a good word picture for where CIC is today.

- There is shared ownership of CIC between us.
- English will remain the language of worship and teaching – the base code - but each one of you can improve and develop CIC into a better church.

- Paul wrote, 'A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other (1Co 12:7 NLT).'
- Solomon wrote, 'As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another (Pro 27:17 NIV).'

Church growth experts would call CIC is a 'complex church.' Here is why:

1. CIC is 92 years old. Most churches are strong for only a single generation.
  - Survival requires a major directional change.
2. CIC had a demoralizing split.
  - Many good people left and went down the road, leaving confusion, open leadership positions, and those remaining having a strong opinion of how we should move forward.
3. CIC's median age was too high.
  - A healthy church's median age is usually around 45.<sup>1</sup>
4. CIC has a school. Churches with schools tend to have more conflict and a financial drain.
5. CIC is the most 'at risk' size. Churches under 200 are intimate and have close relationships with each other, churches over 600 tend to have momentum and financial resources.
6. CIC is 42% (54%?) international. Most churches are homogeneous in one form or another – age, race, politically, socio-economic, or academic level.

We are a very complex church that is why unity matters.

To move forward, there is a pattern, a parallel situation in the book of Acts & in John 17.

## **2. The Pattern: Acts 10-15, & John 17.**

The story is about the blindness of the Jews to their Gentile brothers and sisters.

- Our story starts with two men Cornelius and Peter.
- For Luke, these two men are representative of their ethnic group.

Cornelius was a Roman captain. He was a foreigner and the fist of the oppressor, Rome. However,

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<sup>1</sup> 'As a Church it is our desire to be a growing community of believers ministering to all ages, *impacting those in their late 20's to late 40's*, and focusing on Marriage, Family, and Singles. We will seek to present Christ in a relevant, compassionate, creative way; and reach out to the believer and unbeliever by providing teaching, training, and opportunities that contribute to the establishing and cultivating of significant relationships sensitive to people's needs, hurts, and interests,' David Jackson, SAAG Vision Statement, 1992.

- 'He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God (Acts 10:2 NLT).'
- Cornelius was in prayer and had vision of an angel who told him to get Simon Peter.

Peter was one of the twelve disciples. Peter, too, was in prayer and had a vision of unclean animals. The angel told him to eat these unclean animals.

- Peter refuses citing Jewish purity laws.
- The angel said, 'Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean (Acts 10:15 NLT).'
- This vision was repeated three times.

Three men were sent by Cornelius. They arrive where Peter is staying just as the vision ends.

Pause story. A little background about racism at that time.

- 'It was the Greeks who were the first to make rational arguments for their own sense of superiority.<sup>2</sup>
- The Jews, for their part, 'segregated themselves from Gentiles ... (which was interpreted as) antisocial behavior.'<sup>3</sup> They did not mix well with the Greeks or the Romans.

Resume story. The next day Peter and these three men go to Cornelius' home.

- Cornelius has his whole household assembled.
- Peter talks privately with Cornelius: 'You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup> ... Now tell me why you sent for me (Acts 10: 28-29 NLT).'

A friend pointed out that Peter is very uncomfortable, until he hears that Cornelius has had a vision, too.<sup>4</sup> The charismatic experience of a vision during prayer overcomes Peter's hesitation of racism and impurity issues.

Peter says, 'I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. <sup>35</sup> In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right (Acts 10:35 NLT).'

Peter then addresses the audience and while he is teaching about Jesus, 'The Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. <sup>45</sup> The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter

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<sup>2</sup> Rodolfo Galvan Estrada III, 'What Does the Spirit Have to Do with Foreigners?', *Pneuma* 39 (2017), 275-294 (278).

<sup>3</sup> Estrada, 'Foreigners,' 278, 285.

<sup>4</sup> Estrada, 'Foreigners,' 289.

asked, <sup>47</sup>“Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did (Acts 10:44-47 NLT)?”

- ‘Just as we did.’ Ah, he is thinking of the Day of Pentecost.
- The fact they had the same experience of Spirit baptism and the speaking in tongues overcame any racism Peter may have had.
- Peter now believes the Gentiles were accepted by God.

This gets Peter in trouble with the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. In Acts 11, Peter must explain his actions for baptizing Gentiles in water.

- It is interesting that Peter does not appeal to Jesus’ commission (Acts 1:8) – you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. Nor his own sermon on the Day of Pentecost. ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people ... <sup>21</sup> everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Acts 2:17, 21 NLT).’
- Instead, Peter retells the visions.
- He retells the Holy Spirit falling on the audience.
- He was reminded of Jesus’ words ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:16 NLT).’

Friends, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not just for personal empowerment. Spirit baptism should change our perspective about people who are different from us.

- We should have a deep love for our brothers and sisters.
- We have a special communion with them, because ‘God is not ethnocentric.’<sup>5</sup>
- Don’t get me wrong. We are doing great here at CIC, but we can do better. The Holy Spirit is going to help us.

Trouble continued for Peter. The Jewish Christians asked, ‘how could God accept those Gentiles?’

Acts 15 contains the story of how the early church resolved its Gentile crisis.

- Some Jewish Christians argued that the Gentiles must convert to Jewish circumcision, follow the Torah, and food laws.
- Peter retells his story of the visions, of the Holy Spirit falling on the Gentiles. He says, ‘He (God) made no distinction between us and them ... <sup>10</sup> So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? <sup>11</sup> We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus (Acts 15:9-11 NLT).’
- James, the leader of the church could have cited with numerous OT passages for an exclusive Jewish faith. Instead, he quotes the prophet Amos: ‘I will ... restore the

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<sup>5</sup> Estrada, ‘Foreigners,’ 293.

fallen house of David ... <sup>17</sup> so that the rest of humanity might seek the Lord, including the Gentiles (Acts 15:16-17 NLT [Amos 9:11-12]).'

The Gentiles were now accepted as believers. Racism was officially over. Unofficially, they had some things to work out.

- The Jewish Christians were making a huge change.
- The Gentiles were encouraged to give a little to 'get along.' Twice the Bible says, 'make every effort' to live at peace with each other (Ep 4:3, He 12:14).

The 'get along' requirements:

- Do not eat meat offered to idols.
- Do not eat blood or meat from strangled animals.
- Remain sexually pure.

Let's turn to Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. It reveals something

astonishing: 'I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me (Jn 17:21 NLT).' Look at that last sentence.

- The world will believe that Jesus was sent by God if we have unity – genuine love. Unity with God and with fellow believers. That love and unity speaks volumes to the world.
- Jesus uses the unity of the Trinity as an illustration of the goal. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all diverse, yet one they are so unified.
- Earlier that night, Jesus said, 'I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. <sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples (Jn 13:34-35 NLT).'
- Our ability to love one another is foundational for evangelism.

Again, I think we are doing great here. But we must move past the 'get along' stage to the really loving each other stage.

If God did this then, He can do it here. Here is how we can be better together.

### **3. The Practice: Vision 2026.**

- CIC's future depends on us moving from just 'getting along' to truly loving and serving together.
- For a long time, I have told you that healthy things grow.

These three things will make us healthier. Here are three invitations for you today.

1. Our internationals must take greater ownership, and our core members must make space.

We have some wonderful internationals on the Church Council and leading ministries, but basically a large percentage of our people are sitting on the sidelines. Many attend Sunday mornings only.

- I need your youth in the youth group and Girls Ministries / Royal Rangers.
- I need your children in Kidsmin.
- I need you to bring your gifts and talents of service to this body. Like Linx's software, we are better when we work together.

If those ministries are not meeting your needs, let's talk.

- Yes, we will make mistakes going forward.
- We are mapping out new territory and will make errors.
- I know of no other church like this.

This message started in 2019. Connie and I were close to Armand and Christelle. They have since moved to the Cambridge area.

- They wanted to lead a home group, and I really wanted to see some of our internationals take the next step of ownership here at CIC.
- When I gave him some potential names of people to go after for his home group, he gently pushed back, 'Pastor, I don't think we should be tribal.'
- Ouch, but true.



Since that gentle and respectful correction, I am convinced that we must become 'post-racial' here. Our different ethnicities should dissolve into the background.

- We share the same salvation.
- We share the same Spirit baptism, healings, and daily interaction with the Holy Spirit.
- Must move beyond acceptance to genuine unity and love for one another.

The first question every guest asks themselves is, 'is there anyone like me here?'

- Yes, there is. Praise God. But, seeing our incredible diversity should only be for our guests.
- All the rest of us should be 'post-racial,' and overlook our educational, social status, or political differences.
- We should see 'the content of each other's character,' their qualities, and personalities.



- One of our Pentecostal forefathers wrote, 'The "color line" was washed away in the blood.' – Frank Barleman<sup>6</sup>

If you are one of our great and courageous international members, please, please, please, take ownership and bring your gifts to this church.

The second invitation today is to help me close our back door.

2. We need to close the back door.

- We need greater love and relational stickiness. If someone does not make a few friends in their first couple of weeks, they will leave.
- We also need better follow up of our own people.

I once sat through a seminar on a PhD dissertation. This scholar theorized on how to transform a church into an international church – like ours. It turns out he had only theory and I had experience.

I had to laugh at myself. We did everything right out of ignorance: listened to other's stories, got into each other's lives and celebrated their histories, and we loved deeply.

Here is something to help you to love each other better.

### **Growing your Cultural IQ<sup>7</sup>**

1. Cultivate and inquisitive personality. Step outside your comfort zone and explore new cultural experiences. Visit 'foreign' markets, attend cultural events, try new foods to develop a deeper appreciation for diverse perspectives.
2. Approach others with genuine humility. There is always more to learn and discover. No one person or culture has all the answers. Stay open-minded and embrace a willingness to learn from others, create opportunities for deeper understanding across cultures.
3. Listen Intently. Listen to people from different cultures to help you understand their perspectives and experiences more deeply. This will help you build stronger connections and gain valuable insights. Learn how to pray and support them through challenging times.

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<sup>6</sup> Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street: An Eyewitness Account* (Centennial Edition 2006) (Gainesville, FL: Bridge Logos, 1980), 61.

<sup>7</sup> Rob Hoskins, 11/20/25, [4 Ways to Increase Your Cultural IQ - outreachmagazine.com](https://outreachmagazine.com)

4. Educate yourself. Grow and educate yourself on other cultures. Watch a foreign language film.

Everyone here should be on the lookout for each other – developing relationships with new friends and making sure the established friends are doing okay.

The third invitation for 2026 is that everyone serves somewhere.

### 3. Serve Somewhere.

Here are our needs right now:

Evangelism / Entry points (Men's Basketball, Café of Hope, Community Outreach).

- Always open to new outreach ideas.

### Worship / Celebration

- Greeters 8:30 – Tom DeCastro (2-3 needed)
- Kidsmin Team – Laura Dahlstrom (4-6 needed)
- Nursery – Ashley Paulo (2-4 needed).
- Parking Lot – Pat Klug (4 needed)
- Security – Michael Bartlett (4-6 needed + Federal Grant researcher)
- Welcome Center – Deb Maston (4 needed)

### Connection & Care / Spiritual Growth

- Addiction Recovery inactive / no leader (contact Pastor Randal)
- Beauty for Ashes (grief group) – Karen Milton (2-3 needed)
- Deaconess Ministry Team Leader - no leader (contact Pastor Randal)
- Deaconess – Baptism (2-3 helpers)
- Deaconess – Visitation - no leader (contact Pastor Randal)
- Deaconess – Food Ministry - no leader (contact Pastor Randal)
- Ladies Bible Study (evening) - no leader (contact Pastor Randal)
- Men's Ministry - no leader (contact Pastor Randal)
- Royal Rangers – Pastor JD (2-3 helpers)
- Media / Social Media / Photographers – Tori Klug / Francisco Perez (2-4 needed)

### Service

- Building & Maintenance team – Pastor Randal (4-5 men)
- Garden Care Ministry – no leader (contact Pastor Randal)
- Housekeeping Team - Yojana Westerlind (4-6 helpers)
- Kitchen Team Leader – no leader (contact Pastor Randal)



- Church Street Café – Flo Francois (4-6 helpers)

Obviously, we need your help. We will return to this need in a couple of weeks.

Conclusion.

I believe that CIC can become an even better church if each one of us engages. We are better when we work together.

Imagine a church where every individual and culture contributes ...

- Where every gift is activated ...
- Where every person is known ...
- Where every guest feels loved.

Imagine a church where the world sees Jesus because we love one another to the point of unity.

We are better when we work together.

Close eyes.

- Where am I still operating with a spectator mindset, and what is one concrete step I can take in 2026 to bring my gift into active service at CIC?
- Who at CIC is different from me, and how can I intentionally build a deeper relationship that reflects the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17.
- What would it look like for me to help 'close the back door' by making sure newcomers and regular attenders feel known, welcome, and connected?
- Where can I serve?