



Staying the Course When Leaving Home:

COVENANT RENEWAL & ACCOUNTABILITY

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians. 3:20-21



The majority of young people who graduate from high school leave their families and church, at least temporarily, in order to attend college or pursue some type of vocational opportunity. As your church, we want to help guide you and encourage you while you are away.

Don't Just Survive... Thrive!

Most of us have heard about kids who grow up in strong Christian homes and then end up rebelling once they head off to college. They stop going to church, start drinking, and begin sleeping around. As your leaders in Christ, we certainly want to protect you from falling into such a sinful lifestyle, but we have much more in mind for you while you are away. We don't merely want you to avoid the pitfalls; we want your time away from home to be a rich and positive experience. Your faith might be tested and challenged, but you should come away knowing more about what you believe and more about the grace of Christ. What follows is a description of how we can work with you to make your time away a time of growth.

Staying the Course: A Strategy

The elders of RMCC want to encourage you and hold you accountable by committing with you to the following plan:

1. A covenant renewal ceremony at our church service on Graduation Sunday, when all graduates renew their church membership vows. See the following section entitled, "Covenant Renewal: Your Membership Vows."
2. A meeting with you and your parents, before you leave for school, to discuss what your church membership means and to talk about how to choose an appropriate church while you are away. See the below section entitled, "How to Choose an Appropriate Church."
3. Accountability phone calls. We will call you to see if you are attending church, if there is any way we can help you find a new church, and to see how you are doing spiritually in your new situation. We will call some time after your first month away, again in February and then once a year for the next three years.

Covenant Renewal: Your Membership Vows

Many married couples review or renew their wedding vows to help them remember the promises they made to one another and to give them a fresh sense of purpose in their relationship. In the same way, it is often helpful for us as members of the body of Christ to renew our vows. It helps us to remember what we said we would do. It gives us a renewed sense of our relationship with Jesus and the church. Listed below are your church membership vows. Review them slowly and think about what each one means. Say “Yes” to each one by faith. Pray and ask God to help you keep these vows. Thank him for calling you into covenant with himself and with his people. Remember how these vows make you distinct from most of the people in your new location.

1. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
2. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except by God’s sovereign mercy?
3. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
4. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will serve him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to put to death your sinful nature, and to endeavor to live a godly life as a follower of Christ?
5. Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
6. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to pursue and preserve its purity and peace?

How to Choose an Appropriate Church:

If you were to open the Yellow pages to “Churches” in any of the Billings, Bozeman, or Missoula phone books, you would probably find over a hundred listings for churches. How do you find an appropriate church for your time away from home? We recommend that you take the following steps when seeking to locate a church family where you can grow and be a part of Christ’s body.

1. Is there a Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) in this town? This is the denomination of our church and is most likely the place where you will receive teaching and accountability consistent with RMCC. Unless the church doesn’t fit some of the below criteria, it is probably the best place for you to be connected.
2. Ask any of the elders at RMCC to recommend a good church in your area.
3. Try to visit that church ahead of time with your parents.
4. Gather information about the church. Read any literature they offer. Write the church a letter asking them to tell you about their church. Call and ask to meet with the pastor or a leader. Ask some of the questions below. Talk to one of the elders at RMCC if you have any questions. May God bless you in your search for a good church!

Ministry of the Word:

1. What is their view of Scripture? Do they believe that it is God’s Word which can never be in error?
2. Is the sermon simply a bunch of rules, or is the gospel contained in it?
3. Is the sermon based on the Bible, or is it just a lot of stories?
4. Does the church subscribe to any creeds or confessions? (Such as the Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed or the Westminster Standards.)

5. What is their view of tongues and ongoing prophecy? You probably want to avoid churches that believe that tongues and prophecy are still going on today.
6. Do they offer Sunday school classes and Bible studies which focus on teaching the Scriptures?

Sacraments

1. Can you find any literature on the Lord's Supper or baptism? Read it and call us if you have any questions.
2. What do they believe about the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper?
3. Prior to the Lord's Supper, do they warn people not to partake it in an unworthy manner? Did they talk about what the bread and wine represent?
4. Are children of believers considered part of God's covenant at this church?
5. What is their view of baptism? Do they see it as a sign of our commitment or of God's promises? They should see it as a sign of God's promise to save his people.

Accountability:

1. What's the government of the church? Is there a list of the leadership anywhere? The church should have a board or a group of elders who are in charge and not just the pastor.
2. Are the leaders of this church under authority themselves? They should answer to somebody (like other men in their denomination).
3. Are the leaders qualified men? How do they get appointed? Do they meet the criteria of 1 Tim. 3:1-13?
4. Is this a place where you think you could get involved? Are there opportunities to be involved in Bible studies, to help out with the youth, etc?
5. Has the church exercised church discipline on people? If so, this is an indication that they hold people accountable.

6. What does it take to become a member? A membership class is a good sign that they take accountability seriously.
7. Make sure you talk to one of the elders at RMCC before you plan on becoming another church.

What to Expect Of Us While You Are Away

When you became a member of RMCC, we made a promise to you that we would, “pray, encourage, admonish, love and look out for [your] interests in all humility.” We continue to keep that promise to you—even while you are gone—in the following ways:

1. We will continue to pray for you on Tuesday mornings.
2. We will assist you to the best of our ability in finding a good church.
3. As your pastors and elders, we are available for you to call if you need advice, counseling, or encouragement on an issue.
4. You can listen to each week’s sermon at www.RMCCMontana.org or order them from the church office at 259-7811.
5. We will contact you to see how you are doing and if there are ways we can encourage you in any struggles.

What We Expect Of You While You Are Away:

When you became a communing member, you promised that you would, “submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church.” You can continue to keep this promise to us as you seek to do the following things we expect of you while you are away:

1. Choose an appropriate church and attend their worship service every Sunday.
2. Get involved in the church’s other ministries such as Sunday school, college and career classes or with one of the campus ministries such as Inter Varsity or Campus Crusade.
3. Continue to pursue personal holiness by meeting with the Lord daily and reading his word.

4. Be open and honest when we call you to ask you about how things are going.
5. Call one of the elders or pastors from RMCC if you fall into sin. Living away from home comes with increased opportunities for temptation. These can include getting drunk, doing drugs, growing habitually lazy, or becoming sexually immoral. You should set up wise guidelines to protect yourself from these sins. However, if you do fall into these types of sins while at college, you need to confess your sin to your parents or to one of the elders at RMCC if necessary.
6. Do not date an unbeliever. College is often a time when people meet their future spouses. Do not compromise the Christian faith by entering into a dating relationship with unbelievers while you are away (2 Cor. 7)
7. Call RMCC and let us know if you have found another permanent church body in which to be a member.

