

RENEWAL CHURCH

# MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

*Renewal Church exists to declare and to demonstrate the life-changing power of the Gospel.*



The Renewal Church membership covenant<sup>1</sup> was created out of a love for the local church and each individual member, whom we hope will experience fullness of joy, peace and freedom in Jesus Christ. The covenant is comprised of several sections: general teachings on the nature of the Church and covenants, the “Statement of Basic Faith,” the “Statement of Biblical Distinctives,” and the obligations of members and elders to the Renewal Church body. The purpose of this covenant is threefold:

- To clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for the elders and individual members of Renewal.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for the Renewal body.
- To serve as a tool for reflection, evaluation and growth toward holiness.

Our hope is that the contents herein would serve as a helpful biblical foundation enabling all covenant members to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18).

### **WHAT IS THE CHURCH?**

The church is God’s idea. From the very beginning, God’s goal was to create a people of His own in order to display His glory to the world. Though all of the created order suffers under the curse of Genesis 3, God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem His people – and, one day, creation itself. This redemptive work of Jesus is summed up in the gospel. The gospel is God’s message of good news – the fact that Jesus Christ came to live, die and be raised from the dead in order to forgive our sin, save us from God’s wrath, and bring us under God’s gracious reign, both now and forever. Those who respond with repentance of sin and faith in Jesus form a new redeemed people – God’s church. God’s church is central to His glorious purposes in the world – and we get to be part of that.

The true church of Jesus Christ is a people called out from all neighborhoods and nations to be worshippers of the one true God. These people form a sent community, locally and globally, to declare the gospel of grace, to care for the poor and oppressed, and to reflect the reality of God through holy lives and good works. This church is at once both visible, meeting in local congregations, and invisible, the universal church comprised of all true regenerate believers. True churches are distinguished by the biblical gospel, the sacraments of baptism and communion, and the exercise of church discipline. This makes participating in the life of a local church a sacred privilege as we join in our sovereign God’s redemptive work of pushing back the darkness in our fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Bible uses a host of metaphors to describe Jesus’ church. The church is referred to as the family of God (Matt 12:48-50; Gal 6:10; Eph 2:19), the bride of Christ (Rev 21:2, 9), citizens of the Kingdom of God (Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20), living stones within the temple of God (2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:22; 1 Pet 2:5), the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:21-31) and many others. God chose these particular metaphors to describe a brand new people that are vitally and intentionally committed to one another by nature of their faith in Jesus Christ. Further, each individual has been graciously given different gifts by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the whole (1 Cor 12:7). In other words, the Christian life was never intended by God to be lived alone, but rather, in real, vital, committed relationships with other followers of Christ in the context of the local church. Church membership represents this intentional commitment.

### **WHAT IS A COVENANT?**

A covenant is generally defined as “a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.”<sup>2</sup> Throughout

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this were adapted from materials published by The Village Church, Flower Mound, TX and Downtown Cornerstone Church, Seattle, WA.

<sup>2</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

Scripture, we find a number of covenant examples – some between God and man (Gen 6, 9, 15; Ezek 20; Hos 2; Jer 31; Matt 26) and some solely between men (1 Sam 18; 2 Sam 5). Though types of covenants vary, the concept itself saturates the Bible.

Renewal's membership covenant contains many conditions that are general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of Renewal or other churches, are called to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, and more. Such requirements are universal obligations for followers of Jesus, regardless of any failure on the part of a local church to live up to her covenant obligations. If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere.

In summary, while this covenant focuses primarily on the responsibilities between individual members, the corporate church body, and the elders, it is first and foremost an acknowledgement of general Christian obligations and an agreement to enter into those duties, within the context of this local church, for God's glory and the good of others.

### **STATEMENT OF BASIC FAITH**

The following "Statement of Basic Faith" represents the core of Christian belief from a biblical and historical perspective. While a complete and total understanding of these beliefs is not required, the explicit rejection of any one of these particular beliefs would disqualify one from membership in Renewal. Renewal also has a more comprehensive "[Statement of Faith](#)," and it is a responsibility of covenant membership to have read it in its entirety and to address any questions, comments, or concerns with a pastor or elder prior to becoming a member.

### **I believe that...**

- the Scriptures are true, authoritative and sufficient (Ps 19:7-11; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21).
- there is only one God (Deut 6:4; Isa 45:5-6; 46:9; 1 Cor 8:4-6; 1 Tim 2:5).
- the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God. The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit. The Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son (Gen 1:26; Ps 45:6-7; 110:1; Matt 3:13-17; 28:19-20).
- I am, along with all humanity (Christ excluded), from conception and by action a sinner (Gen 6:5; Ps 51:5; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:23; 5:8, 12-21; 7:18; Eph 2:1-3).
- the deserved penalty for sin is death, both physical and spiritual (Gen 2:15-17; 3:19; Rom 5:12; 6:23; James 1:14-15).
- Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin and is both fully God and fully human (Matt 1:20; John 1:1-3, 14; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1).
- Jesus Christ died as my substitute to pay the penalty for my sin (John 1:29; 10:1-18; Rom 5:8; 1 Cor 15:1-4; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:4; 1 Pet 3:18).
- Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead (Matt 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24; John 20:27; 1 Cor 15:1-34).
- Jesus Christ physically ascended into heaven and will one day physically return (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thes 4:16; Heb 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Rev 1:7).
- there will be a future physical resurrection of the dead. Those who trust in Jesus Christ alone will be raised to eternal reward. Those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal punishment (Matt 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

- only by trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone can I be reconciled to God and experience true life and joy (John 3:18, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom 3:21-26; 1 Tim 2:5-6).

### STATEMENT OF BIBLICAL DISTINCTIVES

While the doctrines expressed in the “Statement of Basic Belief” are those that are recognized to be universal and primary within the Church, there are a number of secondary beliefs about which the leadership of Renewal is passionate:

- The sovereignty of God in salvation
- The work and gifts of the Holy Spirit for life and ministry
- The equality of men and women, with men as responsible servant-leaders within the home and church
- Believer’s baptism by immersion

Complete agreement with these distinctives, which are further expounded in the “[Statement of Faith](#),” is not required for the sake of membership, but it should be known that Renewal will preach, teach and counsel in accordance with these theological convictions, and that members may not teach contrary to them.

### BIBLICAL OBLIGATIONS OF RENEWAL MEMBERS TO RENEWAL BODY

The obligations of this membership covenant are not intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this covenant functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces. As followers of Jesus we are called, by God’s grace, to increasingly reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions, while rejecting others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as “living by the Spirit” (Rom 8).

### By God’s grace, I covenant...

- to submit to the authority of Scripture as the final arbiter on all issues (Ps 119; Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 3:16-17).
- to maintain a close relationship with the Lord Jesus through faith and repentance, and to cultivate that through regular Bible reading, prayer and other means of grace (Ps 119:97; John 15:4; Gal 5:16).
- to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:
  - › by being baptized after my conversion (Matt 28:19).
  - › by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion (Luke 22:19).
- to regularly participate in the life of our body through weekly worship services, and to know and be known in consistent relationships within this church (Acts 2:42-47; Heb 10:24-25).
- to steward the resources God has given me, including my time, talents, and treasure. This includes serving others – inside and outside our church – and financial giving that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Prov 3:9-10; Matt 6:19-24; Luke 12:13-21; Acts 20:35; Rom 12:1-8; 1 Cor 12; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 2:10; Eph 4:1-16; 5:15-16; 1 Pet 4:10-11).
- to live as an ambassador for Christ by proclaiming the good news of forgiveness of sin and new life in Christ to those around me as well as by participating in the Great Commission, whether by going, sending or praying (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).
- to walk in holiness as an act of worship to Jesus Christ, who has saved me from my sin so that I can live a new life (2 Cor 5:17). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while

stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:

- › I will practice complete chastity before marriage and complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage by abstaining from practices such as cohabitation, pornography, adultery and fornication. Regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices. (Job 31:1; Prov 5, 6:20-7:27; Matt 5:27-30; Rom 13:12-14; 1 Cor 6:9-7:9; Eph 5:3; Heb 13:4).
- › I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through steps of marriage reconciliation within Renewal before pursuing divorce from my spouse (Matt 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-16).
- › I will refrain from gossip and believe the best about others until proven otherwise. Should a disagreement arise or trust be broken, I will go directly to the offending party to seek reconciliation before talking to others about them (Matt 18:15; 2 Cor 12:20; James 4:11; “[The Peacemaker’s Pledge](#)” is helpful for practical instruction in conflict resolution)
- › I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, and other sinful behavior as the Bible and my conscience dictate (Rom 1:28-32; 13:13; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:18).
- to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to others (Rom 14:13-23; 1 Cor 8-10).
- to submit to the discipline of God through the Holy Spirit by:
  - › following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another – the hope of such

discipline being repentance and restoration (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13).

- › receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Ps 141:5; Prov 12:1; 15:32; 27:6).
- to do the following when I sin:
  - › confess my sin to God and to fellow believers.
  - › repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5; James 5:16-20; 1 John 1:6-10).
- to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church (Eph 4:1-3; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:5)
- to do the following should I leave the church for righteous reasons:
  - › to resign my membership by formally notifying a pastor.
  - › to seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.

## **BIBLICAL OBLIGATIONS OF RENEWAL ELDERS TO RENEWAL MEMBERS**

In addition to the responsibilities of regular members, the elders, as shepherds and overseers of a local church, are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping and caring for the church body. The following is an abbreviated list of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures, and to which your elders additionally covenant with the members.

### **By God’s grace, the elders covenant...**

- to uphold the criteria assigned to them in Scripture, and appoint elders and deacons that will meet the qualifications of these offices (1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4).

- to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love, and to seek God's will for our church community as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-5).
- to care for you and seek your growth as a disciple of Christ, in part, by equipping you for service (Eph 4:11-14) and praying for you regularly, particularly when confronted with serious illness (James 5:14-15).
- to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Tim 5:17-18).
- to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).
- to lovingly and graciously exercise church discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health of the church as a whole (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5; Gal. 6:1).
- to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (Phil 3:17; James 3:1).

## COVENANT DECLARATION

*I have read the Renewal Church Membership Covenant. I affirm the Statement of Basic Faith, have read the fuller [Statement of Faith](#), have read the Statement of Biblical Distinctives and agree to not be divisive about any disagreement(s), and understand that this covenant obligates the elders of Renewal to the members and obligates me, as a member, to the church body. I accept the responsibility to notify leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant or if I have any questions, comments or concerns. By God's grace, I will seek to fulfill my obligations as a follower of Jesus and covenanted member of this church for God's glory, my joy and the good of as many as possible.*

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Signature

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Print Name

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Date