



The 95th Convention
of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester
October 24, 2026

A95

Subject: A Covenantal Relationship between the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester and Rural & Migrant Ministry

Originators: The Rev. Julie Cicora, retired; The Rev. R. Columba Salamonmy, Trinity, Geneva; The Rev. David Hefling, retired; Ms. Linda Ketchum-Pompili, Trinity, Greece; Ms. Mary Lou Hunt-Quintal, Redeemer, Addison; The Very Rev. Troy Preseton, Christ Church, Corning; Ms. Roxanne Gaylord, St. Thomas, Bath

Resolution

Whereas, the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester established a covenant with Rural and Migrant Ministry in 2004 that was approved by Diocesan Council

Resolved, that the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester renew its covenant with Rural and Migrant Ministry and strengthen our partnership with continued collaboration by sharing our time, talent, and treasure and be it

Further Resolved, that individuals and parishes partner with Rural and Migrant Ministry through attending JOY Celebrations and events, volunteering and serving on the Board of Trustees, communicating RMM news in their communities, and donating and raising money for RMM and be it

Further resolved, that the Bishop, diocesan staff, and Board of Trustees continue to be good stewards of the financial assets, buildings, and property of Grace Church, Lyons, incorporate a budget line for yearly support of RMM, and invest personnel time to the securing of outside grants and other resources for RMM and be it

Further resolved, that the Bishop maintain communication with the Executive Director and Board of Trustees of RMM, and use their voice and the power of the diocesan institutional presence and witness to stand with and promote RMM in the public square and be it

Further Resolved, that the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, through this Covenant, explore new possibilities including, but not limited to:

- RMM educating and linking members of the Diocese to efforts that welcome and protect immigrant neighbors.
- RMM providing a pathway to advocacy at the State level.
- RMM providing leadership development training for youth and youth leaders toward the creation of youth empowerment programs/groups

- RMM offering workshops in transformational outreach
- RMM offering vocational development and training for seminarians and deacons

Explanation

Covenants: Since its inception in 1981, Rural & Migrant Ministry (RMM) has found great strength and witness through conventional partnerships with different denominations across New York State. Through these covenants, RMM provides a vehicle for faith bodies to live into their mission of witness, service, and partnership with rural families, especially farm working families. In turn, RMM's mission has been strengthened with the public statement that we stand in solidarity with these denominations. The covenants have also strengthened RMM through the commitment of the faith bodies to share time, talent, and resources. RMM also provides a vehicle for the Covenanting Denominations to build partnerships among each other and to share ministry as a part of the Covenant.

History of Rural & Migrant Ministry and the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester: RMM was invited by many individuals, organizations, and congregations to establish a presence in the Diocese of Rochester in 1997. In 2002, RMM moved its offices to St Luke's Episcopal Church in Brockport.

In 2003, a task force was created by Bishop McKelvey to explore the opportunity and feasibility of entering into a Covenantal relationship with RMM. During this period, the issue of farmworker human rights was a prominent focus of the Diocesan Public Policy Committee. After a period of discernment, a resolution was unanimously developed by the Task Force and presented to Diocesan Council in 2004, where it was approved.

In 2009, RMM was invited to use the rectory of Grace Episcopal Church in Lyons by the Northeast Partners in Ministry. The center was named "Liturgia" (Latin for honoring the public work of the people). For over eight years, RMM partnered with Grace in Lyons and other congregations in the region to serve all of western New York.

In 2016, the Vestry of Grace, Lyons, voted to close. There was a great deal of discussion with Bishop Prince Singh, members of Grace, and RMM about how to keep a ministry presence on the campus of Grace and how to protect the ministry of RMM. It was decided to take two steps: 1) Grace Church would officially close, and 2) through a unique partnership, the diocese and RMM would create a new mission called Grace! At the 84th Convention, the diocese voted to close Grace Church and then passed a resolution creating a partnership between the Diocese and RMM on the campus in Lyons. A special administrative committee was created from the grassroots and RMM to oversee the buildings, liturgy, and program of Grace! The committee reported to a special executive committee including: the bishop, a member of the Trustees, the priest-in-charge and leaders of Grace!

Rural & Migrant Ministry brings an array of gifts and opportunities to the diocese including:

- Connection to, and partnership with, grassroots rural populations, especially farmworker families

- Experience in building multi-faith, multi-racial, and cultural ministries that cut across class divides and build positive community change
- Over forty years of experience and expertise in nurturing leaders—equipping “saints”
- Extensive experience, expertise, and success in building community and nurturing leaders among young people
- Experience in embodying faith values and witness in the public square.
- Connections to non-profit organizations, universities, labor unions, and advocacy coalitions.
- A federal credit union
- A long-standing commitment to food security and food system sustainability
- The ability to stand alongside and build bridges of hospitality among immigrant brothers and sisters
- The provision of a vehicle for members of the diocese to live into their baptismal covenant

The Episcopal Diocese of Rochester brings critical gifts and opportunities to the mission of RMM including:

- Over two hundred years of wisdom, experience, and commitment to being beacons of God’s love and passionately loving our neighbors
- Time, talent, and treasure that can be shared to strengthen the mission of RMM and the people of RMM
- Facilities to house the programs of RMM and provide sanctuary to the people of RMM
- The power of institutional presence and witness to stand with RMM in the public square