Parental Leave Policy Project Receives Seed Funding from the Foundation and Annual Conference

November 3, 2025 (GLEN ALLEN, Va.) – The Virginia United Methodist Foundation (VAUMF) has joined forces with the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church (VAUMC) to provide an implementation grant as seed money to launch a parental leave funding program in the spring of 2026. This funding will help the conference start to cover pastoral support fees for clergy on parental leave.



The foundational paperwork states, "The Virginia Conference supports families and advocates for parental leave for all persons welcoming a child into their home, both clergy and lay. Further, we encourage all parents who are welcoming a child into their home to make full use of parental leave policies. The United Methodist Book of Discipline allows for up to 13 weeks of maternity or paternity leave for clergy families."

This policy applies to all clergy, both part-time and full-time, and the purpose is to assist clergy families, local churches, district superintendents and the annual conference in advocating for parental leave in the church and beyond the church. Parental leave may be taken consecutively or nonconsecutively, full or part-time, according to the needs of the family. Taking parental leave will not affect the clergy person's pension, health benefits or appointment status.

Additionally, churches will maintain their regular compensation for clergy on leave for the duration of the leave. The Annual Conference may assist local churches with funding for pastoral coverage, up to $8,000 per leave. Laity serving a local church or annual conference-funded ministry setting under episcopal and/or superintendent assignment, will also qualify for parental leave.

Adoptive and foster parents will also qualify for parental leave under this new policy. Parents who are adopting can receive the same number of weeks' leave as birth parents. Foster parents may take up to four weeks of paid parental leave.



The policy will go into effect on January 1, 2026, and funds will be accessed through a request to the cabinet via their district superintendent.

According to Assistant to the Bishop and Chief Operating Officer Rev. Doug Forrester, "I could not be prouder of how conference leadership, the cabinet, and the Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) have coalesced around this new initiative. It balances the needs of local churches and the communities they serve with the possibility of our clergy families investing in what is irreplaceable time with their children. It demonstrates yet another way in which the Virginia Conference is working to be a leader in the realm of clergy wellness."

VAUMF President the Rev. Dr. Steven J. Summers shares Forrester's enthusiasm for this new program, "The Virginia United Methodist Foundation is honored to provide seed funding for this important initiative, ensuring that clergy parents have the support they need to care for their families while continuing to faithfully serve their congregations and other ministry settings. Investing in parental leave is an investment in the long-term health and vitality of ministry across Virginia."

About the Virginia United Methodist Foundation
The Virginia United Methodist Foundation(VAUMF) exists to serve local churches and Conference agencies in their efforts to expand their programs and ministries through planned giving and endowment funds. The Foundation also invests monies for local churches and Conference agencies in accordance with the socially responsible investing principles of the United Methodist Book of Discipline.
The Foundation has provided more than $600,000 in grants since 2015 to support worthy ministries and projects within the Virginia Conference of the United

Methodist Church (VAUMC). The Virginia United Methodist Foundation accepts donations to its grants fund year-round.

About the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church
The mission of the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (VAUMC) is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping local churches for ministry and providing a connection for ministries beyond the local church, all for God's glory. This mission is carried out through fostering holistic disciple-making, promoting justice, mercy, and compassion, and embodying core values like spiritual growth, service, and inclusivity.