North County Churches Uniting For Racial Harmony and Justice
13200 New Halls Ferry Road, Florissant, MO 63033

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 2025 Oratory Contest Application

Only essays on the following topic will be eligible entries in the oratory contest: "Mentoring the Dream: Leading with Light and Love." The essay should focus on the topic of what you and others can do to lead with light and love and thus "mentor" or keep the dream alive and strong.

Contestants must submit word-processed essays (double-spaced) with this application, completing **ALL** blanks on the form. **The essay & application must be postmarked** by **December 12, 2025** or **emailed** no later than midnight on **December 16, 2025.**

Mail to: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratory Contest, 13200 New Halls Ferry Rd., Florissant, MO 63033. **Or Email** to ***NCCUSTL@gmail.com.*** Entries will be acknowledged by email. If you do not receive an acknowledgment, contact Dr. Barbara Thompson at 314.780.4464 or John Thomas at 636.395.7144. Essays that focus on the details of King's life will not be chosen as finalists.

First Place prizes valued at $100, and finalist certificates will be awarded in each category.

Finalists will be notified by **December 23, 2025.** Finalists will present oratories before judges **Saturday, December 27, 2025,** from **10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** at Florissant Valley Presbyterian Church.

First-place winners will present their oratories and receive their prizes at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration sponsored by St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley in the Terry M. Fisher Theatre on Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 6:00 P.M.

Please mark category	Category	Essay Length	Oratory Length	Subject
	Senior (60 or older)	500-650 words	4-5 minutes	"Mentoring the Dream: Leading with Light and Love."
	Adult (18–59)	500-650 words	4-5 minutes	
(Fill in grade) Grade _____ Grade _____	Youth Grades 9-12 Grades 6-8	300-500 words	3-5 minutes	
Grade_____	Grades 3-5	150-300 words	2-3 minutes	

Last Name_____ **First Name**_____

Street Address _____ **City** _____ **Zip**_____

Phone_____ **Email**_____ **Birthdate**_____

Sponsor Name _____ **Email**_____ **Phone** _____

School _____**Church**_____

I grant permission for publication of my essay if I am a winner.

Signature (Parent/Guardian signature if student) _____

Printed Parent/Guardian Name(s) _____

Parent/Guardian Email & Phone# _____

Sponsor and Parent/Guardian name & contact information required for communication purposes.

NCCU

NORTH COUNTY CHURCHES UNITING
FOR RACIAL HARMONY AND JUSTICE
13200 New Halls Ferry Road
Florissant, MO 63033
November 10, 2025

Covenant Churches
A **GROWING** List

Black Jack Baptist Church
Christ Ministries@The Community Church
Christ Our Redeemer A.M.E. Church
Church of the Master United Church of Christ
First Presbyterian Church
Florissant Valley Presbyterian Church
Greater Grace Church
Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church
Immanuel United Church of Christ
John Knox Presbyterian Church
Lutheran Church of the Atonement
Lutheran Church of the Living Christ
New Creation in Christ Church
Olivet Missionary Baptist Church
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
Sacred Heart Catholic Church
St. Andrew United Methodist Church
St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
St. Ferdinand Roman Catholic Church
St. Mark's United Methodist Church
Shalom Church (City of Peace)
Third Presbyterian Church
Trinity Church of the Nazarene

Dear Educator:

NCCU, North County Churches Uniting For Racial Harmony and Justice, is hosting its annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratory Contest. This contest offers youth and adults the opportunity to write and present a speech celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream. St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley determines the topic, which is "*Mentoring the Dream."* We ask that you distribute the enclosed information to your students or possibly add the project as a writing assignment or an optional project for your students.

Paper applications and essays must be mailed to the address in the heading and postmarked by December 12, 2025. Electronic applications may be emailed to *NCCUSTL@gmail.com* and must be time-stamped by midnight on December 17, 2025.

Finalists chosen to present in the oratorical contest will be notified by December 23. The oratorical contest is scheduled for SATURDAY, December **27, 2025,** from **10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Florissant Valley Presbyterian Church.**

The five winners selected on DECEEMBER 27 will participate in a face-to-face practice to be scheduled at the contest. The winners will present their oratories in person at the Dr. Martin Luther King Celebration hosted by St. Louis Community College--Florissant Valley on **Tuesday, January 20, 2026**, at 6:00 p.m. They will receive their $100 checks that evening.

Enclosed please find a flyer, contest application, written speech scoring guide, contest suggestions, and contest rules, which may be duplicated or distributed electronically. If you are interested in building this opportunity into your curriculum, please contact us, and we will forward copies of classroom materials. Please notice that there is an adult category, so we hope that you will consider submitting a speech also.

Should you have any questions or need additional materials, please contact Dr. Barbara Thompson (314.780.4464) or John Thomas (636.395.7144). Thank you for your work. Stay safe and well during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Barbara K. Thompson

Dr. Barbara Thompson
NCCU Acting President
Chair, Oratory Contest

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NORTH COUNTY CHURCHES UNITING FOR RACIAL HARMONY AND JUSTICE

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratory Contest Rules 2025

Oratory (Speech) Subject and Preparation:

1. Contestants must prepare their own speeches, and the speeches must be substantially original. The written essay should be submitted with the contest application and should be typed and double spaced. Any quoted material must be identified in the written essay and during the speech presentation.
2. References to Dr. King throughout the oratory should be phrased as "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," "Dr. King," or "he."
3. Contestants will be delivering their oratories in person at Florissant Valley Presbyterian Church on December 27, 2025. Contestants will stand at a podium; a stool will be available so that judges can see gestures and body language.
4. **The speech should reflect the values of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and fit the contest theme "*Mentoring the Dream: Leading with Light and Love.*"**
5. Dr. King's legacy includes his famous speeches, his work in civil rights, his use of non-violent protests, his work in politics, and his work on behalf of social issues, such as unity, labor and poverty. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s concept of the Beloved Community describes a society based on love, justice, and equality, where all people are treated with dignity and have equal opportunity. It is a vision of a world free from racism, economic exploitation, and militarism, achieved through nonviolent action and the pursuit of "positive peace," which is the presence of justice rather than the mere absence of tension. Other Information about Dr. King's legacy and "Mentoring the Dream: Leading with Light and Love" is available at www.thekingcenter.org and by conducting an Internet search on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his beliefs. The contest topic comes from his "I Have a Dream" speech. In his speech at Oberlin College on October 22, 1964, Dr. King spoke about the future and the Beloved Community. What was his dream about racial harmony and justice? How can you and others continue his work and mentor his dream of achieving racial harmony and justice? The speech should address ways of continuing Dr. King's dream in 2026, fifty-eight years after his assassination. ***Note: Any speech that is a simple retelling of the events of Dr. King's life will not be chosen as a finalist.***

General Procedure:xs

1. A contest chairperson, judges (3 minimum), and timers shall be appointed.
2. The contest chairperson will brief contestants on the rules and will brief judges on their duties.
3. Contestants will present by age category in alphabetical order.
4. Each contestant shall be introduced by announcing the contestant's name, school, and/or church or other sponsoring organization, and title of speech.
5. There will be silence between contestants while the judges mark their ballots.
6. Contestants should remain in the Florissant Valley Presbyterian Church sanctuary throughout the duration of the contest.

Disqualification/Protest:

1. Prior to announcing results, the chair should announce if timing disqualification occurred.
2. Protest shall be limited to judges and contestants. Protests shall be lodged with the chief judges and/or chair. The contest chair shall notify the contestant of the disqualification regarding originality or eligibility prior to the announcement of results.
3. Majority of the judges must concur in the decision for disqualification.
4. Winners must present their oratories at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration sponsored by St. Louis Community College~Florissant Valley on January 20, 2026.
5. All decisions of the judges are final.

6. Please contact Dr. Barbara Thompson, 314-780-4464, nccustl@gmail.com, or John Thomas, 636.395.7144, with questions regarding contest rules.

North County Churches Uniting For Racial Harmony and Justice

Suggestions for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratory Contest 2025

Only oratories on the topic "*Mentoring the Dream: Leading with Light and Love* " will be eligible entries in the oratory contest. Make sure that the oratory **stays** on that topic.

1. Teachers whose students are entering the contest, please consider a brief lesson on "*I Have a Dream."* This phrase comes from Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech in which he repeated the phrase 10 times, with an additional two uses of the word "dream" not in the phrase "I have a dream." Ask the students why they think that Dr. King repeated the phrase so many times. What is the effect of the repetition?
2. Show excerpts of a video of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. The text of the speech is available at flaglerlive.com/16748/i-have-a-dream-speech-mlk/ and at https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/122701268/i-have-a-dream-speech-in-its-entirety. How does that speech suggest that the dream can come true?
3. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made many visits to Oberlin College. Consult this webpage: https://www2.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/BlackHistoryMonth/MLK/MLKmainpage.html
4. Brainstorm ways of keeping Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream alive by talking, working, playing, studying, learning with others.
5. Sometimes contest entries merely retell Dr King, Jr.'s life. Include only details that relate to "*Mentoring The Dream: Leading with Light and Love."* The speaker should explain how he/she can help keep that dream alive and "Lead with Light and Love" and how members of the audience can do the same.
6. No more than 10% o f the oratory should be quotations, and the quotations should make a point about the topic. Each quote should be identified with phrases like "*As Dr. King said (or wrote*)" or "*According to Dr. King…"*
7. The oratory should be original and written in the orator's own words, except for quotations.
8. Elementary school teachers who are using this contest as a class assignment might consider opening the unit with a read-aloud. Examples:
    a. Caldecott Honor Book *Martin's Big Words* by Doreen Rappaport. Sample lesson*:* http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/martin-words-thinking-about-92.html
    b. *My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers* by Christine King Farris. Sample lessons: http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/martin-luther-king-identifying-257.html?tab=4
    c. *It Starts With Me,* by Dr. Bernice A. King and Dr. Kimberly P. Johnson, available at www.thekingcenter.org. Use plans available at https://thekingcenter.org/what-we-do/classroom-resources/#teach
9. For elementary students: Show & facilitate discussions of videos available in *The Reading Corner* at thekingcenter.org
10. For middle school students, high school students, and adults: Show & facilitate discussions of videos available in *Interactive Civil Rights Talks* and Panels at thekingcerter.org.
11. *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Legacy of Racial and Social Justice: A Curriculum for Empowerment* (for students in K-8) is available at https://www.nps.gov/malu/learn/education/lessonplansandteacherguides.htm
12. Register for the lesson plans available at https://thekingcenter.org/what-we-do/classroom-resources,

Thank you for your support!





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North County Churches Uniting For Racial Harmony & Justice
13200 New Halls Ferry Road, Florissant, MO 63033



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratorical Contest

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." " I have a dream that one day...little Black boys and Black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Celebrate the life, work, and values of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- ✓ **Essay (written oratory) and contest application must be postmarked by December 12, 2025, or emailed no later than midnight on December 16, 2025.**
- ✓ **Finalists chosen to participate in the oratorical contest will be contacted by December 23, 2025.**
- ✓ **Finalists will present their oratories on SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Florissant Valley Presbyterian Church.**
- ✓ **All essays should reflect the values of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the theme of "MENTORING THE *DREAM: LEADING WITH LIGHT AND LOVE."***

<u>Contest Categories</u>

Senior (age 60 and over)

Adult

Youth in Grades 9-12

Youth in Grades 6-8

Youth in Grades 3-5

Five winners will be selected.
Winners will present oratories at the
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration
St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley
at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 20, 2026.

To reference Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s values, please visit www.thekingcenter.org

For contest application and rules, please call Dr. Barbara Thompson, 314.780.4464, or John Thomas, 636.395.7144.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Written Speech Scoring Guide 2025

4 Points

The speech

- has an effective beginning, middle, and end.
- contains a clear main idea on the topic of *"Mentoring the Dream: Leading with Light and Love."*
- clearly addresses the topic and provides specific and relevant details/examples.
- contains words that are specific, accurate, and suited to the topic.
- consistently uses complete sentences.
- clearly shows an awareness of audience and purpose.
- contains few errors in grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling.

3 points

The speech

- has a beginning, middle, and end.
- contains a main idea that is related to the topic of *"Mentoring the Dream: Leading with Light and Love."*
- addresses the topic and uses some relevant details/examples.
- contains some words that are specific, accurate, and related to the topic.
- generally uses complete sentences.
- shows an awareness of audience and purpose.
- may contain errors in grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling that are not significantly distracting to the reader.

2 points

The speech

- has evidence of a beginning, middle, and end.
- contains a general sense of direction, but may lack focus on the topic *"Mentoring the Dream: Leading with Light and Love."*
- may tell the story of Dr. King's life, and/or include irrelevant quotations.
- attempts to address the topic, but may contain some details that are not relevant.
- uses words that tend to be repetitive, imprecise, and ordinary.
- may contain incomplete sentences that are distracting to the reader.
- shows some awareness of audience and purpose.
- contains errors in grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling that may be distracting to the reader.

1 point

The speech

- may lack evidence of a beginning, middle, and/or end.
- is difficult to follow and/or lacks focus on the topic of *"Mentoring the Dream: Leading with Light and Love."*
- may tell the story of Dr. King's life, and/or include irrelevant quotations.
- does not address topic and/or lacks development.
- uses words that are consistently repetitive, dull, and colorless.
- shows little or no awareness of audience and purpose.
- may contain repeated errors in sentence structure, grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling that make it difficult for the reader to understand the writing.