

# 2025-2026 EAST OHIO UMC MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MERIT SCHOLARSHIP GUIDELINES

The **East Ohio Martin Luther King, Jr. Merit Scholarship** is administered by the Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry which awards scholarships to students based upon merit. Merit is based upon academic performance, church involvement, and financial need. The Board may award up to one (1) \$5,000 scholarship. This is a one-year scholarship, yet a student may apply each year of their schooling. Notification of scholarship awards will be made to all applicants no later than July 1, 2025. Questions concerning this or other United Methodist scholarships and loans should be directed to Pastor Christy Suffecool at (800) 831-3972 ext. 116 or [csuffecool@eocumc.com](mailto:csuffecool@eocumc.com)

**SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTED IF SUBMITTED ONLINE, details can be found here: <https://www.eocumc.com/scholarships/index.html>**

1. The student must have a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Attach a current Transcript.
2. The student must be an active member of a United Methodist Church in East Ohio. Preference will be given to students that are admitted to or attending a United Methodist affiliated college or university for the 2025-2026 college year.
3. The Student Application form **MUST** be completed by the student and not by a third party (such as a parent). Attention and care should be given to spelling, punctuation, correct grammar, and coherent content. It is recommended that the applicant request conversation and mentoring with their pastor or church lay leader as they create their essay.
4. All materials should be submitted online through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) website. The link to their website is posted here <https://www.eocumc.com/scholarships/index.html>. Hard copy submissions will not be accepted. **The deadline for submission is March 31, 2025.** There are NO exceptions to this deadline, please do not ask.
5. The student **MUST** submit ALL materials for the application to be considered. A complete application will include:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Student Application Form – with all sections completed. Incomplete applications will not be considered.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ A current Transcript.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ A personal letter of recommendation from a pastor or lay person (who is not a relative) who knows you well which states:
    - a) The length of time you have known the applicant
    - b) How you have worked/related with the applicant
    - c) Why you feel the applicant is deserving of a scholarship.

It is the APPLICANT'S responsibility to make sure recommendations and forms are submitted on time.

## Essay Directions:

Using the information provided below and **from your own research**, please write an essay about your understanding of the life and work of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. How has this research impacted your personal faith? Write no less than 1,500 words and no more than 3,000 words. Attention and care should be given to spelling, punctuation, correct grammar, and coherent content (reminder: any quotes need to be cited properly when used). It is recommended that the applicant request conversation and mentoring with their pastor or church lay leader as they create their essay.

### • Scripture

- o Micah 6:8 – “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”
- o Isaiah 1:17 – “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”

- o Psalm 89:14-16 – “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, LORD. They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness.”

- **The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy Name.  
Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy will be done in earth,  
As it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
The power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen.

- **Definition of Justice (from Dictionary.com)**

1. The quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness: to uphold the justice of a cause.
2. Rightfulness or lawfulness, as of a claim or title; justness of ground or reason: to complain with justice.
3. The moral principle determining just conduct.
4. Conformity to this principle, as manifested in conduct; just conduct, dealing, or treatment.

- **This is an excerpt of the “I Have a Dream” speech by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

(Printed with permission)

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination....One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land....

There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.’

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

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 today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plains, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together....

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!...

Let freedom ring from every hill and mole hill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'

- **The Social Principles of the UMC** – paragraph 162, section 3

- o "We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection."
- o For the full text of The Social Principles, go to <https://www.umc.org/en/who-we-are/what-we-believe/our-social-positions>

- **Historic Information Reference Point**

### **Understanding Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a prophet for justice who made the ultimate sacrifice in order to transform a society that was steeped in a racial injustice that had permeated the entire social and political structure of America and had led to a history of social inequality relative to African Americans.

Dr. King became morally convicted to transform this society of racial injustice and prejudice. Dr. Martin Luther King called for America to look deep into herself and to live up to the moral and ethical foundation on which this nation was built.

Dr. King stood for what he believed was right. He stood up for African Americans who were being discriminated against. He helped to change our society by giving African Americans the same opportunities that all citizens had, which meant Blacks no longer had to sit in the back of the bus, go to segregated schools, or were limited to work at only menial jobs. He brought to the world's attention how unfairly blacks were treated.

Dr. King did not just stand against the oppression and segregation of Black people in the South, but for justice and equality for every American, everywhere. As it is written in the Declaration of Independence "We are all created equal" and have certain 'unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'" And it's every American's duty to defend these rights whenever and wherever they are violated.

These social variables were the impetus that sparked a young southern Christian preacher, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to pick up the torch of liberation and activism and to work on behalf of the

“least of these” in the society of the 1960’s. Dr. King taught a social Gospel and was deeply concerned for the very people that Jesus stood for in his time. King was not interested in building mega churches and sanctuaries. Rather, he was more concerned about building human character and used his brilliant oratory skills to challenge a modern-day Roman Government (American Government) that was even more powerful than Pilate’s. The Prophet lost everything, but they never lost their faith in God; - this was the faith of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### **Poor People's Campaign**

Jobs, income and housing were the main goals of the Poor People’s Campaign. The campaign would help the poor by dramatizing their needs, uniting all races under the commonality of hardship and presenting a plan to work toward a solution. Under the "economic bill of rights," the Poor People's Campaign called for the Federal Government to prioritize helping the poor with a \$30 billion anti-poverty package that included a commitment to full employment, a guaranteed annual income measure and more low-income housing. The Poor People’s Campaign was part of the second phase of the civil rights movement. While the first phase had exposed the problems of segregation, King hoped to address the "limitations to our achievements" with a second, broader phase.