

**State Congress of Christian Education
Auxiliary to the
General Baptist State Convention
of North Carolina, Inc.**

**The James F. Wertz Oratorical Contest
Conference Guidelines and Rules**

June 27, 2025

Fayetteville State University (FSU)
Fayetteville, North Carolina 28301



Rev. Dr. Ricky L. Banks, *President*
General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Inc.

State Congress of Christian Education

Rev. Eddie R. White, III., *President*

Rev. Dr. Lafayette Maxwell, *Dean*

Sis. Gloria Brooks, *Oratorical Director*

Rev. Dr. Doris Sanders, *Assistant Oratorical Director*

It's that time of year again for the James F. Wertz Oratorical Contest and Conference. The Oratorical Contest and Conference will be held on Friday, June 27, 2025, at Fayetteville State University (FSU), 1200 Murchison Road, Fayetteville, NC, 28301, in the Broadwell College of Business and Economics, in Shaw Auditorium at 10:00 AM. **Registration begins at 8:30 AM.**

The oratorical contest is tremendously valuable in enhancing our youth's spiritual development and communication skills. The State Congress of Christian Education desires that our associations consistently carry out the oratorical program. Therefore, the information compiled in this booklet is designed to assist associations and their churches in preparing, planning, and executing the oratorical program with excellence.

The contestants for the Oratorical Contest for each association will be classified according to the following divisions:

Division I: Preparatory (Grades 6, 7, 8) as of July 1, 2025

Division II: Juniors (Grades 9, 10, 11) as of July 1, 2025

Division III: Seniors (Grade 12) must be in grade 12, or rising Senior as of July 1, 2025
(12th Grade Seniors must graduate in June 2026)

The State Congress of Christian Education continues to sponsor this event with your financial assistance. We ask that your association/district and church pay their assessment to the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Inc./State Congress of Christian Education. This year the assessment is the same as always, \$400.00. This assessment may be paid in two parts: Half in February 2025 and the remaining balance in June 2025. Please read this document carefully. If you have questions or need clarification about any of the information, please contact the persons listed below:

Sis. Gloria Brooks, Oratorical Director

Brooksg56@yahoo.com

919-923-8479

Rev. Dr. Doris Sanders, Assistant Oratorical Director

RevDSanders1@gmail.com

980-320-4938

Welcome to the
2025 Annual
J. F. Wertz Oratorical Contest
OFFICIAL ORATORICAL TOPICS
(2023-2025)

Division I: Preparatory

Lord, I Surrender
(Matthew 16:24-25)

Anointed to Win
(1 John 2:20)

Being About our Fathers Business
(John 6:29)

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**Division II: Juniors**

Evangelism is a Lifestyle  
(Matthew 28:19-20)

Transformed From the Inside Out  
(Romans 12:1-2)

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Division III: Seniors

Serving God in an AI age
(How does AI [Artificial Intelligence] either help or hinder teenagers in
serving God or sharing the Gospel.)
(Romans 12:2)

2025 OFFICIAL TIME FOR EACH DIVISION

Division I: Preparatory

Grades: 6th, 7th, 8th

TIME: 3-4 MINUTES

Not under 3 minutes but not over 4 minutes

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## **Division II: Juniors**

**Grades: 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>**

**TIME: 4-5 MINUTES**

**Not under 4 minutes but not over 5 minutes**

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Division III: Seniors

Grade: 12th

TIME: 5-6 MINUTES

Not under 5 minutes but not over 6 minutes

The Oratorical Contest Namesake Reverend Dr. James F. Wertz (1902 - 1974)

The Late Reverend Dr. James F. Wertz, the son of Reverend L. W. and Clara Wertz, was born on May 10, 1902, in Newberry, South Carolina. As a young lad, Reverend Wertz exhibited leadership and religious characteristics.

He attended Johnson C. Smith College (Johnson C. Smith University), Charlotte, North Carolina; Shaw College (Shaw University), Raleigh, North Carolina; and North Carolina College for Negroes (North Carolina Central University), Durham, North Carolina.

He served the Baptist of North Carolina (General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Inc.) as Director of Christian Education; President of the B. T. U. Convention; and Chair of the Executive Committee. He also served as president of the Pee Dee Home and Foreign Mission Association.

Before moving to Charlotte in 1944 to become pastor of Saint Paul Baptist Church, he had previously pastored the following churches: Shiloh Baptist Church, Maxton, North Carolina; First Baptist Church, Southern Pines, North Carolina.; and Buffalo Springs Baptist Church, Raeford, North Carolina.

In recognition of his leadership and many contributions to religious education and the cultivation of good human relations in Charlotte, North Carolina; he received numerous plaques and ceremonial acknowledgments. Friendship College of Rock Hill, South Carolina, further recognized his public service by conferring upon him the Doctor of Divinity Degree.

Reverend Wertz saw a need for students to develop their oratorical skills, thus, he instituted an oratorical contest to prepare students for public speaking. In his honor, the James F. Wertz Oratorical Contest was named. The contest gives youth an opportunity to witness Christ as well as involve the youth in public speaking. The contest has become an annual program sponsored by the State Congress of Christian Education, an Auxiliary to the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Inc.

Reverend Dr. James F. Wertz departed this life on Tuesday, July 9, 1974, in Charlotte, North Carolina.

RULES AND PROCEDURES

The term *oratory* is defined as the art of public speaking; expressiveness or skill in making speeches to the public; or public speaking marked using a forceful vocabulary.

The James F. Wertz Oratorical Contest is divided into the following three stages for contestants: **(1)** Your local church selects the highest place winner - one from each division; **(2)** The winners from the churches proceed to their District or Associational level, where the highest place winners are selected - one from each division; and **(3)** The winners from the District or Associational level for **Division I: Preparatory, Division II: Juniors** and **Division III: Seniors**; proceed to the State level where the winning contestants are honored. In addition to the Senior first-place winner being honored at the State level, he/she will then proceed to compete at the National level.

CONTESTANTS AFFILIATION:

1. Contestants who compete on the State level are representatives of the Associations, **NOT** their local churches; **therefore, all contestants must be affiliated with an Association. Contestants must be members of a church in their association and residents of North Carolina.**
2. Each Association is allowed **one** representative for each division: Preparatory, Juniors, and Seniors. **All contestants must be members in “good standing” in their local church, as well as in their Districts/Associations.** The Congress representative fees for each association are \$400.00 and \$400 for each church. Congress asks that the representation fee be paid by **June 2025**. (Keep in mind that a portion of the assessment fee of \$400.00 for churches and associations is used to fund the Oratorical Contest participant’s monetary awards, trophies, and National Congress Expenses). Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this financial matter.

QUALIFICATION FOR CONTESTANTS

1. The oratorical contest is open to all young people in grades 6th through 12th in the year that the contest is being held. Example: a contestant must be entering the 6th grade as of **July 1, 2025**. The Junior division must be entering the 9th grade as of **July 1, 2025**. **NOTE: Seniors who will graduate from High School as of July 1, 2025, are not eligible to participate. ALL seniors must graduate in June 2026.**
2. The contestant must prepare a speech on one of the official topics from their division.
3. Students entering the contest that has been called into Ministry may participate with the understanding that their speeches must be an oration, not a sermon or sermonette.
4. **ALL SPEECHES MUST BE MEMORIZED.**

CONTEST RULES

1. All contestants are required to speak on the official topics for their division.
2. All contestants are required to state their official topic first.
3. Each contestant should prepare their own speech. However, the contestant may receive advice in the preparation of the speech.
4. The use of props, such as special costumes, clothing, books, or other items **ARE NOT PERMITTED**. Bibles, notes, papers, or anything that can be construed as a prop **cannot be taken to the podium by the contestant**.
5. No reference may be made that might identify the contestant, their family, or the specific geographical area from which he/she originates.
6. The time allowed cannot be over or under the specified length for each category. Should the time be over or under the length, the **PENALTY is 5 points.**
7. Appropriate dress is necessary. Remember that you are being judged on your appearance as well as your overall presentation. ***Make a good first impression!***
8. The Judges have the final decision on all orations.
9. We will always try to have three judges present; however, in the event, one of the judges fails to show, we will continue the contest with the remaining judges.
10. All speeches are the property of the State Congress of Christian Education, an Auxiliary to the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Inc.

GENERAL RULES

Coaches Need to Know!

1. Spectators may not enter or leave the audience while a contestant is speaking. Please alert your congregation. This rule will be strictly adhered to as movement creates a distraction for the contestant.
2. Please ensure that the congregation has turned off all electronic equipment with noise.
3. Please refrain from opening candy during the contestant's speech. Distractions can cause contestants to lose focus.
4. Please **DO NOT** applaud until after all participants in each division have finished their speeches.
5. Each contest shall have three judges and two timekeepers.
6. The judges should not be acquainted with the contestants.
7. The judges and timekeepers will not be identified at the time of the contest or by advance notice. The judges and timekeepers will be identified only after the last oration has been presented for the division.

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8. Each judge will render a final decision on all contestants' orations without consultation with other judges or any other person. Each judge and timekeeper must sign his or her official score sheet.
 9. At no time will a contestant or judge discuss the contestant's scores. The results of a judge's decision will be kept confidential.
 10. The Judges will use an official score sheet to judge each contestant. The official score sheet shall equal 100 points. The judges' scores are the final decision.
 11. Selection of winners will be based on the judges' scores and the deduction of any time penalty points that a contestant may have received.
 12. The Director or the Assistant Director will conduct a drawing prior to the beginning of the contest with all the contestants present to determine the speaking order.

TIPS FOR ORATORICAL CONTESTANTS

1. **POSTURE** is important in public speaking. Walk and speak with confidence. If you need to adjust the microphone, please do so when you get to the podium.
2. **GREETINGS:** The contestant is required to begin their speech with the topic first: "My Topic Is: _____." The following phrase, which may be included in the speech, will be a part of the time: *"To the presiding officer; honorable judges, ladies, and gentlemen."*
3. No identifying information, i.e., the contestant's, church's, or pastor's name **SHOULD NOT** be included in the speech.
4. The opening remarks catch your audience's attention. A quotation may be used as your opening statement. It should be lively and relate to your topic. Your introduction should make your listeners sit up and think, "this is going to be good."
5. As you develop your speech, you may refer to the Bible for scriptures that will support your topic.
6. Your points to be discussed may be numbered – strong points first, and then stronger ones, and then the strongest point listed as a high point of the speech. Transition words to introduce each point, such as "to begin with," and "to conclude," give continuity and organization to the development of your speech.
7. Contestants should use a natural and comfortable delivery style. Clear and strong enunciation, pronunciation, and delivery are important.

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8. Do not race through your speech. Speak distinctly. Speak with sincere feelings. Be careful about the volume.
 9. The conclusion of your speech should sum up what has been said. It may include answers to questions such as "Where do we go from here?" Gestures should flow naturally, as the right amount of gesturing lends emphasis and relieves monotony. However, too much action takes away from words.
 10. Remember that you only have one chance to make a good impression. Consider ending your speech with a challenge, a question, a poem, a quotation, or an anecdote.
 11. **ALL SPEECHES MUST BE MEMORIZED!**
 12. Contestants should arrive at the contest site at least thirty minutes prior to the start of the contest.

HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR SPEECH

To complete this exercise, you should have already chosen your topic and your research should be finished; the next thing to do is to choose the method of organization that you believe is the most appropriate to use.

YOUR TOPIC: _____

METHOD OF ORGANIZATION TO BE USED: _____

Write the major points of the topic on the back of this page or on another paper. Using the method of organization, you have decided on, list three or four of the major points below in the order you would present them. After you have filled in these blanks, go back, and write the reason you have put each of the points in the order you chose.

FIRST MAJOR POINT: _____

Reason for using this point in this order: _____

SECOND MAJOR POINT: _____

Reason for using this point in this order: _____

THIRD MAJOR POINT: _____

Reason for using this point in this order: _____

Speech Evaluation Checklist

When you have completed your speech, use the following checklist for revising and editing. Consider each of the questions below.

FIRST READING

- ☐ Are my thoughts clearly stated?
- ☐ Are my thoughts centered on one major idea or thesis?
- ☐ Did I have to slow up my reading because of faulty mechanics or language usage?

SECOND READING

Introduction

- ☐ Have I made introductory comments that are likely to capture the reader's attention?
- ☐ Have I included my opinion on the topic (thesis) or stated a central idea?
- ☐ Have I implied or stated how I plan to develop the major idea (thesis) or central idea?

Body

- ❑ Does each paragraph relate to the thesis or central idea?
- ❑ Does each paragraph contain one main idea only?
- ❑ Do the ideas in each paragraph hang together (coherence)?
- ❑ Are the topic sentences for each paragraph supported with facts or examples?

Conclusion

- ❑ Do I begin my conclusion with a separate paragraph?
- ❑ Do the beginning words of my concluding paragraph effectively signal that my discussion has ended?
- ❑ Do I refocus on the major emphasis of my speech?

More Tips for Effective Public Speaking

Here are just a few speaking tips and techniques that may help you develop your skills and become a far more effective speaker.

Mistakes

- ❑ Mistakes are all right.
- ❑ Recovering from mistakes makes you appear more human.
- ❑ Good recovery puts your audience at ease – they identify with you more.

Humor

- ❑ Tell jokes if you are good at telling jokes.
- ❑ If you aren't good, it may be best to leave the jokes behind.
- ❑ There's nothing worse than a punchline that has no punch.
- ❑ Gentle humor is good in place of jokes.
- ❑ Self-deprecation is good try not to lay it on too thick.

How to use the Speaking Environment

- ❑ If your space is confined, use stronger body language to convey your message.
- ❑ You can learn to enjoy public speaking and become far more effective at standing in front of a group of people and delivering a potent message.
- ❑ When it comes to improving your public speaking skills, we have three words

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!!

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASSOCIATION DIRECTORS

The primary responsibility of the Association and District Directors is to provide contestants with the opportunity to compete in the State Oratorical Contest. To meet this goal, the Director should do the following:

1. Familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations governing the oratorical contest of the State Congress of Christian Education, Auxiliary to the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Inc.
2. Plan an oratorical competition event at your Association and District churches, using the guidelines developed by the State Congress of Christian Education's Oratorical Contest.
3. Assist churches in the recruitment of youth from your Association and District churches to compete in the contest.
4. Review all the rules, guidelines, and forms with the contestants.
5. Recruit persons to listen to them and provide pointers as they practice their oration.
6. Recruit at least three judges from outside your association when conducting the oratorical competition.
7. Conduct an oratorical competition event at your association.
8. Post the names and pictures of your winners in the newspaper.
9. Invite the contestants' parents and members of the Association and District to attend the State competition.
10. Mail the oratorical entry form, speech, and photograph to the Oratorical Director by the deadline submission date, **June 2, 2025**.

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2025 Application Information

A. Oratorical Contest Entry Form

B. Contestant's Speech **MUST Be Type-Written, Double-Spaced, New Time Romans Font, Size12 Point**

C. A Current Picture

Must Be Submitted by the Association/District Oratorical Director as Follows:

DEADLINE SUBMISSION DATE

Monday, June 2, 2025

Mail Information To:

The Oratorical Director

Sis. Gloria Brooks
1328 Bright Wood Dr.
Burlington, NC 27217