



**Contest topics: Please select ONE of these topics.**

**Climate and peace**

Climate and peace are linked together in many ways. Climate change has the power to both drive and exacerbate conflict. As climate change intensifies, communities affected by violent conflict may be less prepared to respond to climate disasters. Conversely, communities that lack the resources to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis may be more susceptible to violent conflict. In addition, war and violence create environmental damage and contribute to higher emissions.

- *Understanding the Issue (40 points):* What causes climate change? Which countries have historically contributed the most to climate change and what areas of the world are most impacted by its effects? What do communities need to be resilient in the face of climate change? Describe how climate and peace are related using an example of an area of the world that is experiencing war or localized violent conflict as well as the impacts of climate change.
- *Problem Solving (40 points):* What could justice look like for countries vulnerable to both climate change and violent conflict? Historically, the U.S. has pledged to reduce emissions and contributed funds to communities around the world impacted by climate change (Green Climate Fund, Loss and Damage Fund, etc.). Imagine international policies and programs that could strengthen climate and peace capacities in vulnerable countries. Outline what that could look like and how the U.S. could be involved. What role do Anabaptist values play in shaping climate and peace initiatives?
- *Letter to Congress (10 points):* Write a letter to your member of Congress (see tips below) that describes why you feel strongly about the intersection between climate and peace. Name at least one U.S. federal government policy you want them to consider to address both climate and peace internationally? Include how this policy would be advantageous to the U.S. Please submit a separate page at the end of the essay (maximum 200 words).
- *Writing style (10 points)* – Essays will be granted up to 10 points for writing style, grammar, spelling, citation, creativity and coherency.

**Immigration**

Immigration continues to be a topic that elicits strong emotions and passionate discussions. But, at the most basic level, what is immigration and what factors drive people to leave their homes or countries? In the U.S., enforcement of immigration laws has broadened dramatically since the beginning of 2025. What effects does this have on immigrant communities and what policies do you recommend we implement going forward?

- *Understanding of the issue (40 points total)* – (choose one option)
  - *OPTION 1:* Interview an immigrant in your community. When, why, and how did they come to the U.S.? How does this immigrant's story compare with (1) the

common reasons people migrate to the U.S. today; (2) stories of migration in the Bible; and (3) the stories of your ancestors or yourself?

- *OPTION 2:* Visit a church, shelter, restaurant or other community hub that serves or employs immigrant populations. Which country(ies) does this population of immigrants come from. Discuss a few factors that might have influenced them to come to the U.S. What challenges might they face as a result of increased immigration enforcement? What benefits do immigrants provide to your community?
- *Problem solving (40 points total)* – What federal government policy changes should be made to address (1) problems with our current U.S. immigration system; and (2) the root causes of migration to the U.S.? How should our Anabaptist values and Christian faith influence our recommendations?
- *Letter to Congress (10 points)* – Write a letter to your members of Congress (see tips below) that describes why you feel strongly about the issue you have chosen. Ask them to consider your policy recommendations (maximum 200 words). Please submit as a separate page at the end of your essay.
- *Writing style (10 points)* – Essays will be granted up to 10 points for writing style, grammar, spelling, citation, creativity and coherency.

## **What is peace?**

“Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (Romans 14:19). In a systemic sense, “peace” often refers to an absence of overt violence in a community or society. The concept of peace, however, can be expanded to include the absence of harm more broadly. What does peace, in a systemic sense, mean to you? What does it mean to be a peacemaker in these times?

- *Understanding of the issue (40 points total)* – What does peace, in a systemic sense, mean to you? How do your Christian or Anabaptist values influence the ways you think about peace? What global, national, and local struggles are we facing where you see a lack of peace? Where do you currently see U.S. federal government policies bringing peace? Where do you see U.S. policies eroding peace?
- *Problem solving (40 points total)* – Choose a peace-related issue that a community or society faces today and outline a very basic peacemaking plan to engage with it. What would it look like to include “mutual upbuilding” as part of that plan? What current pieces of U.S. congressional legislation, or imagined bills, could move us in a positive direction toward greater peace on that topic? Include specific U.S. government policy recommendations that would help support change.
- *Letter to Congress (10 points)* – Write a letter to your members of Congress (see tips below) that describes why you feel strongly about the issue you have chosen. Ask them to consider your policy recommendations (maximum 200 words). Please submit as a separate page at the end of your essay.

- *Writing style (10 points) – Essays will be granted up to 10 points for writing style, grammar, spelling, citation, creativity and coherency.*

**Guidelines for writing letters to Congress** (maximum 200 words)

[mcc.org/resources/advocacy-toolkit-us](http://mcc.org/resources/advocacy-toolkit-us)

- **Introduce yourself:** Include details such as grade/age, school, and city. You can include other details, for example, that you are a “Christian,” “follower of Jesus,” or “person of faith.”
- **Describe the problem(s):** Explain, briefly, what problem(s) you are trying to solve. Make clear how the problem is causing human suffering.
- **Make your “ask:”** Be clear what action you are asking the member of Congress to take (e.g., co-sponsor a particular piece of legislation, vote yes on an upcoming bill). Cite the bill number when possible. Explain why you think this will solve the problem.
- **Personalize your message:** Describe how your experience, observations, and/or Christian faith shapes your viewpoint on this concern. Include connections to your home community when possible.
- **Repeat:** Briefly repeat your “ask” in one short sentence and end with a “thank you,” “sincerely,” or other polite sign-off.

Find examples of letters at [npjim.mcc.org](http://npjim.mcc.org) (“U.S. advocacy campaigns”)

Mail or email your letter to the members of Congress who represent you!

[congress.gov/members/find-your-member](http://congress.gov/members/find-your-member)