

Church of God in Christ Keeping Convention in St. Louis

The largest African-American Pentecostal church in America has chosen to keep its annual convention in St. Louis through 2016.

The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) and St. Louis Convention and Visitors Commission (CVC) announced that the Holy Convocation, which has convened downtown since 2010, would remain in the Gateway City.

The St. Louis CVC has ranked the denomination as one of the largest conventions that assembles in the destination. Before moving to St. Louis, the convention was held for 103 years in Memphis, Tenn., the church's international headquarters.

"During the past three years, the Church of God in Christ has brought over \$105 million to the St. Louis regional economy," Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake Sr. says. "The mayor, city officials and residents have shown the church great respect, warmth and hospitality. We look forward to returning each November in the coming years to this incredible city."

CVC officials expressed their joy that the relationship with the Church of God in Christ will continue.

"The St. Louis community is delighted in the Church of God in Christ's selection of St. Louis for these additional years," says Kathleen Ratcliffe, president of the St. Louis CVC. "St. Louis has rolled out the red carpet and welcomed, with open arms, thousands of COGIC saints ... building a positive relationship with the entire voting body."

"COGIC saints know that they are welcome in our community, and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to continue that

welcome in the years ahead.”

The Church of God in Christ is the fifth-largest Protestant religious denomination in the United States, the largest African-American Pentecostal church in the country and the second-largest Pentecostal organization in the world, with churches in 60 countries worldwide and an estimated membership of nearly 6.5 million members.