

First Lady Addresses AME Church

Addressing the 49th General Session of the African Methodist Episcopal Church General Conference Thursday, First Lady Michelle Obama urged those in attendance to apply their faith to their daily lives and to “finish the journey to fulfill the promise of democracy for all our children.”

Obama was the keynote speaker at the conference held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville, Tenn. The African Methodist Episcopal Church is the nation’s oldest black religious denomination and claims a membership of more than 3 million people worldwide.

“Jesus Christ didn’t limit His ministry to the four walls of the church,” Obama said. “He was out there fighting injustice and speaking truth to power every single day. He was out there spreading a message of grace and redemption to the least, the last and the lost. Our charge is to find Him everywhere, every day by how we live our lives.

“That is how we practice our faith.”

Obama praised the leadership of the AME church, founded in 1787 in Philadelphia. The AME is comprised of more than 7,500 churches around the world.

The first lady challenged the AME bishops, pastors and lay leaders in attendance to continue the path their predecessors have blazed before them.

“A legacy is not an end unto itself,” she said. “As a pioneering AME woman, Dr. Jamye Coleman Williams once said, ‘You do the best you can and try to leave a legacy, but somebody has to carry it on.’ ... We can learn from our history about the power of being an active, engaged citizen in our

democracy.

“I want you to think of the stories in the Bible about folks like Abel and Noah; folks like Abraham and Sarah, and the verse in Hebrews (11:13) that says, ‘All these people were still living by faith when they died’ (NIV). Through so many heartbreaks and trials, those who came before us kept the faith. They could only see that promised land from a distance, but they never let it out of their sight.”

AME church leaders gather every four years for a general conference. Obama’s husband, Barack, addressed the conference in 2008 a few months prior to his election as President of the United States.