

First Lady says church is good place to discuss political-moral issues

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [July 25, 2012](#) issue

First Lady Michelle Obama held up the church as the place to deal with political issues and the catalyst for getting people to the polls in a speech June 28 to members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

“You see, living out our eternal salvation is not a once-a-week kind of deal,” she said in a keynote speech at the historically black denomination’s quadrennial General Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. “And in a more literal sense, neither is citizenship.”

She noted that Jesus did not keep his work within the walls of the church. “And to anyone who says that church is no place to talk about these issues, you tell them there is no place better—no place better,” she said. “Because ultimately, these are not just political issues—they are moral issues.”

Obama said those issues—whether discussed in city council meetings or by Washington politicians—should surface in grassroots locations like church parking lots, barbershops and beauty salons. “Find that nephew who has never voted—get him registered,” she suggested.

The First Lady urged about 10,000 people at the conference to resist thinking their votes don’t count. “Let’s be very clear,” she said. “While we’re tuning out and staying home on Election Day, other folks are tuning in.”

Obama drew on Old and New Testament imagery for overcoming great obstacles. “If a young shepherd could defeat a giant, if a man could lead a band of former slaves against the most powerful city in the land until its walls tumbled down, if a simple fisherman could become the rock upon which Christ built his church,” she said, “then surely, we can do our part to be more active citizens.”

Prior to his election, President Obama addressed the last AME General Conference in July 2008. His wife’s speech preceded scheduled discussions of get-out-the-vote initiatives during the AME Church meeting. —RNS