



In 1863, Chicago witnessed the founding of Original Providence Baptist Church as an endeavor of Black people with a dream. The little church began at 26 North Irving Avenue (later changed to 325 N. Irving due to city address changes) as the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams of a few fugitives from slavery. The desire for independence and freedom had led them to Chicago by way of the Underground Railroad. A few had purchased their freedom in previous years, but the majority of them had willingly dropped their chains to follow a “star” to live according to the direction of their conscience.

Their church was organized under the name of “Providence” Baptist Church because the term suggested divine guidance. God’s assistance had been so pronounced in all their efforts. They felt God’s hand directing the course of every path they pursued. Indeed, “Providence” had been of special meaning of all of us as God’s gracious presence and constant help; as divine challenge and vital urge to labor for better things in His name; as our Eternal Guide and ever present friend.

Within a few years, the founders were joined by other faithful souls who united with them to form a band of nearly three hundred. They were able to raise enough money to purchase a lot and build their first church.

Under the leadership of the first documented pastor Rev. Thomas L. Johnson the church was completed. Rev. Johnson had been a slave for 28 years of his life and gained his freedom after the Civil War. He came to be the pastor in 1873 and served for 3 years until August 6, 1876, at which time he and his wife Henrietta set sail to England where he studied at the Pastor’s College established by Dr. Charles Spurgeon. Rev. Johnson and his wife became Missionaries in Africa. (He wrote a book about his life entitled “Twenty-eight Years a Slave” another book about his life entitled “Steal Away Home” was written in 2017 by Matt Carter and Aaron Ivey).

The people had a “mind to work” and the fruits of their labor became evident, not only in physical things but spiritual growth of Providence Baptist Church led by the following pastors: Thomas L. Johnson, William Belay, R.E. Jackson, B.B. Hillman, John Pope, A. Newsome, A.L. Harris and Robert Darden. The Rev. A. L. Harris holds the distinction of having served as pastor of two different periods.



In 1911, a larger more commodious edifice was erected at 217 North Leavitt Street under the pastorate of the Rev. S. L. Frances. The Rev. Frances' pastorate ended in 1915. He was succeeded by the Rev. Boston Prince and Rev. J. Wesley Carter; the latter of whom served from 1922 until 1929. The Rev. R. Wendell Phillips served as pastor from 1929 to 1957.

In June of 1958, Rev. Edgar T. Thornton took over the helm of this great ship. In the period since July, 1958, we witnessed many changes in terms of growth as well as locations. The locations were conditioned by urban renewal and during that period, we were somewhat like Israel in her quest for land of promise. In 1960 we moved from 217 North Leavitt Street to 1857 West Jackson Boulevard, in 1969 we moved to 3040 West Washington Boulevard, and finally we journeyed to our present location, 515 North Pine Avenue in 1972. The edifice was purchased from the congregation of Austin Second Baptist Church. Dr. Thornton served faithfully from 1958 until his retirement June 30, 1996.

Rev. Euclid Todd served as Interim Pastor for three years until the election of the next shepherd was selected.

On February 14, 1999, Rev. James A. Missick came to pastor Original Providence Baptist Church from New Central Baptist Church of Norfolk, Virginia. Rev. Missick served the church until January 19, 2008.

Upon Rev. Missick's departure, Rev. Beverly Finley-Gardner, a daughter of Original Providence Baptist Church who is the first woman to be licensed (June 9, 1996) and Ordained (October 1, 2000) in Original Providence, served as Interim Pastor until October 3, 2009.

On October 3, 2009 Rev. Cleophus J. Lee was selected as the pastor. Rev. Lee served the church until January 9, 2015.

During this transitional period Rev. Beverly Finley-Gardner served as Acting Pastor. She was assisted by Rev. Linda Thomas and Rev. Lynnetta Majors. They stood in the gap until May 2016 when Rev. Victor L. Roland was selected to serve as Interim Pastor.



On April 8, 2017, the members of Original Providence Baptist Church voted in Rev. Victor L. Roland as their 18th Pastor.

Original Providence Baptist Church stands as a monument to the cause of Christians in the immediate community and in the City of Chicago. It is an example to generations yet unborn of what trust and faith in God means to those who will become reconciled to His will. It stands as a sacred place in which the gospel message can be preached to all humankind.

It is our hope that this present generation will evaluate with care the spiritual legacy that has come from the distant past. Original Providence has had some of the finest leaders and pastors. Through the leadership of these theologians and the willingness of the members of the church to follow, we have built for the church and the city, a background which justifies our recognition of 155 years of service in the advancement of the Kingdom and Glory of God.

We are located at:

Original Providence Baptist Church
515 North Pine Avenue
Chicago, IL 60644

We can be reached at:

Church: (773) 378-5678
Fax: (773) 378-4559

###