

Avenue Baptist Church¹

500 S. 11th Street
Monroe, La.

Parent: None

Founder: The Reverend Gabe Smith

Year: 1927

Longest Pastorate: The Reverend L.B. Oliver (41-)

Number of Pastors 1927-2014: Three

In the spring of 1927 two ministers: The Reverend Gabe Smith and The Reverend Prince Cornelius Keal had a meeting to organize a church. It was the year of the great flood of the Mississippi that plunged hundreds of homes in our area under several feet of water, the ministers met to layout plans for the founding of a church. The Reverend Smith said, “*Let’s name the church Avenue,*” because it would be a place to worship the Lord. At the first worship spirits were high as the Reverend Keal thundered forth a powerful message entitled, “*We will walk by faith.*”



Rev. Charlie Reed

The meetings for the church were held in a frame house, but that did not diminish the spirit and the power of the Lord that was felt by all. For three years the Reverend Smith preached and the congregation slowly grew. However, in 1930 the frame house burned. In an emergency meeting held at the home of the Reverend Smith, several faithful members gathered and unanimously agreed to rebuild the building. The Reverend Smith supervised the rebuilding effort, but before it was completed he died.

The death of the church’s pastor and founder saddened the congregation, but the members resolved to complete the work. Finally, in 1931 the building was completed and Rev. C. H. Reed² became the pastor. Soon history repeated itself when a fire occurred again. The church was tried in the fire and was completely destroyed, but the members were not dissuaded.

Once again the members assembled to plan the rebuilding.

To facilitate the rebuilding the church was officially incorporated in 1963. Its official name became “*Avenue Baptist Church, Inc.*” The new corporate charter stipulated that the board of directors of the church

¹ **Official History of the Avenue Baptist Church**, November 21, 2004 from church archives.

² Reed, Rev. Charlie H., Obituary Notes, from the Official Obituary of Reverend C.H.Reed, in the personal collection of Roosevelt Wright, Jr., Monroe, La. March 11, 1973. Notes: “Reverend Charlie H. Reed was born June 22, 1897 in Perryville, Louisiana to the late Reverend Willis Reed and Rebecca Reed. He was converted and baptized at an early age by Reverend Dan Reese, pastor of the Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Oak Ridge, La. And was a member of that church for number of years. Upon moving to Monroe, Louisiana he united with the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church under the leadership of the late Reverend W.P. Darrington, was crowned deacon and served faithfully for seven years. He was then called to the ministry and was ordained at the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. He was soon elected as pastor of Avenue Baptist Church, his first church, where he remained pastor until his death. His funeral sermon was preached by Reverend E.D. Nation. The Reverend Flood Jackson spoke behalf of minister and remarks were made by Dr. S.D. Hill.

would have full control of the direction and administration of the church.³ Its board of directors, according to its new state charter, meets annually on the 1st Friday of December to select new officers. The trustees or board of directors members were: Henry Causey, president; George Washington, vice president; Joseph Sharp, secretary; and Roger Saulsberry, treasurer.⁴ The document was witnessed by Maebelle Sawyer and Imogene C. Edwards on September 21, 1963.

A year later, in 1964, many repairs and renovations were made to the edifice including the bricking of the building.

The Reverend Reed led the congregation for 33 years. The deacons of the church during his tenure were: Deacon Dave Woods, Deacon Elijah Black, Deacon Homer Gibson, Deacon George Washington, Deacon Henry Coffin, Deacon Roger Saulsberry, Deacon Elijah Swayzer, and Deacon Joseph Sharp.

The Mother's Board members under the Reverend Reed were: Mother Ida Black, Maggie Gibson, Lula Chase, Margaret McClendon, Ada Kim, Mary Sharp, Pearline Price, Emma Logan, Almeida Wilson, Sarah Nash, Lucinda Swayzer, Ella Chisley, and Delia Jenkins.

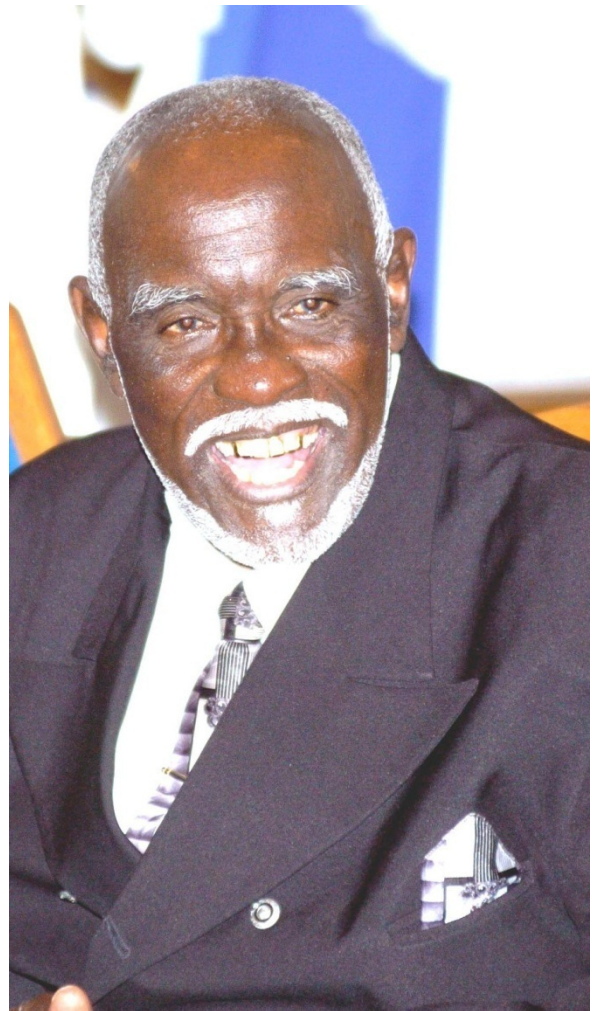
The Reverend Reed died in March of 1973. Three months later in June of 1973 the members elected The Reverend Lonnie B. Oliver as pastor. The Reverend Oliver continued the walk of faith.

The Reverend Oliver taught the congregation the biblical principle of tithing. He emphasized Acts 1:4-8 and inspired us with teaching and preaching such topics as, "*Learning how to rejoice when catching hell;*" "*The tragedy of NOT knowing unlimited opportunities in a limited world,*" and "*God's answer to man's concern; spiritual birth.*"

The accomplishments under the Reverend Oliver included: WSE and Industrial Club organized, enlargement of the sanctuary, revised ceiling, walls and flooring, new pews, addition of new classrooms,

kitchens area, fellowship hall, Pastor's study, organ purchased, new air condition system, Trustee Board, weekly Bible classes, High Tech PA System, Vacation Bible School, Youth Department, Youth Church on 4th Sunday with The Reverend Greg Oliver as the first youth minister.

It was the year of 1988 when again Avenue Baptist Church was tried in the fire; the worship facility was heavily damaged by another fire. Renovations came quickly and the Reverend Oliver kept the church working. We followed this schedule: Sunday School at 8 p.m., Worship Service on 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays.



Rev. Lonnie B. Oliver

³ **Articles of Incorporation of the Avenue Baptist Church, Inc.**, Ouachita Parish Court House, Monroe, La., September 21, 1963, #525776, p. 739.

⁴ **IBID**, p.740.

Additionally, a Woman's Auxiliary was organized, and a church center was constructed. In 1998 our first Women's Conference was held and we began the following: Family Day in 1999, States Recognition 2001, Worship service with Rev. F. Dunn and Rev. Lonnie Oliver Jr on 1st Sunday, youth ministry 2002 and the dedication of a new organ in 2004.

Deacons ordained under Rev. Lonnie B. Oliver, Sr. were Willie Scott, Frazier Evans, Thomas King, William Collins III, Sylvester Byrd, Charles Brewster, Donald Griffin, Dwight Goins, and Clyde Thompson.

Mission Board members under the Reverend Lonnie B. Oliver, Sr. were: Sis. Emma Henderson, Maggie Byrd, Lizzie Baldwin, Naomi Gray, Erma Brewster, Leslie Griffin, Margaret Burrell, Annie B. McIntosh, Katie Collins, Martha Etier, Margie Chisley, Johnnie Thomas, Hannah Manuel, Bernice Collins, and Jeanette Payne.

Other officers have included: Pillars Sis. Artency Griffin – Youth Director, Sis. Fannie Kent – Pres. WSE Club, Sis. Louise Franklin – Sunday School Teacher class #9, Sis Cleotha Goins – Pres. Usher Board, Bro. Noah Jenkins – Vice Pres. Usher Board, Sis Priscilla Kelly – Sunday School Teacher class #5 and secretary of the choir.