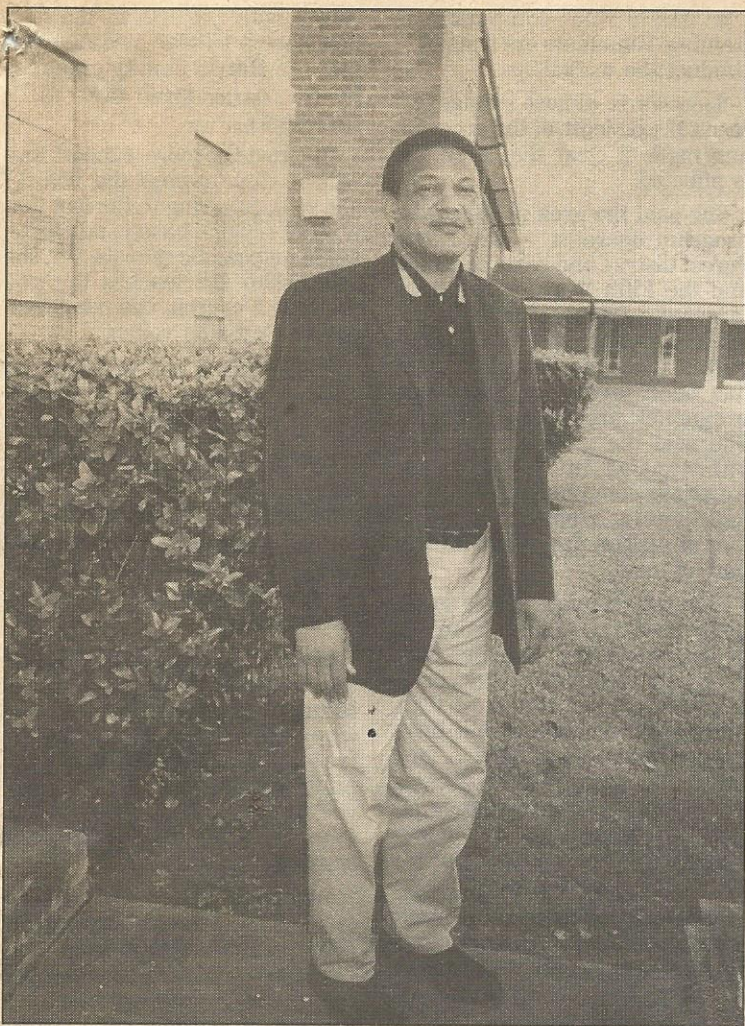


COMMUNITY



The Rev. Marvin Delaney of South Park Baptist Church strives to make technology more accessible to his community.

Minister helps students keep up with technology

By BRIDGETTE MARYLAND
Houston Chronicle

As one of the first nine people to integrate La Marque High School in 1965, the Rev. Marvin Delaney of South Park Baptist Church carries on his lifelong quest of promoting justice the

Faces in the crowd

Godly way.

"I was the first out of the nine to receive my diploma, because of my last name. I thought this was something I always wanted to

would require the working knowledge he was accustomed to performing. Members of his community needed new skills to meet new demands.

He was inspired to tackle the problem. His solution? Provide access to technology at an early age.

Delaney believed by piquing youths' interests he could instill in them a determination to learn new technology. So he sold his pickup truck and purchased four computers to launch the first Computer Science Initiative in 1978. Shell later collaborated and donated funding towards the development.

see equality of justice," said Delaney.

For 23 years, he has focused on educating and preparing community residents with technological knowledge for equal access to the job market and religious guidance.

Growing up as a young Pentecostal with spiritual parents was an obstacle for the young Delaney. He sensed adults ignored his interests. As an act of rebellion, he tried out for the football team.

"My parents were more possessive. I could play, but not football. It was not the Pentecostal thing to do," he said. "My sisters could not wear shorts or makeup. Pentecostals believe that defines being a real Christian."

However, his parents' strict work ethic proved to be Delaney's guiding force. An interest in technology inspired him to study computer science at Alvin Junior College after completing high school.

However, having equal access to the job market was a barrier. Delaney said black students were only offered janitor and cook positions.

"When I went to work at a chemical company in 1966, they told me I had to work in the kitchen. I told them I was not starting there and would protest. So they started me on the mail truck," said Delaney. "Black students did not get computer jobs until compliance by Chapter 7 of the Civil Rights Act."

Shell Oil Co. hired him as a computer operator in 1968 during his second college year. Swift learning progressed Delaney to senior data program technician where he began writing codes for specialized computer equipment. He traveled extensively over a seven-year period, installing computers and doing goodwill tours for the company.

"Once Shell picked me up from college, I was going to school, hit and miss. I took my courses at Alvin. Then I started studying business administration at Texas Southern University. When I got close to graduating, I was making so much money that I did not need to continue," he said.

Facing the new computer age forced him to prepare for the future. Delaney knew the community had no idea the upcoming era

"I took the computers up to the church's second floor. I called the kids in the community and said, 'Hey, let me teach you something about basic computer programming.' They got involved and began writing programs," said Delaney.

The program was a success and caught the eye Houston Independent School District. Soon, he was teaching at Alcott Elementary School through the Sights Program, Jesse Jones High School's Vanguard Program and nights at Attucks Middle School for Houston Community College under Samuel Massey.

"The outreach from that time and the 1980s was to take the knowledge from Shell and pass it on to the community. Shell now has a multi-million-dollar lab in Palm Center complex because of what I believe to be the computer collaboration I started," he said.

After accomplishing one of his life goals, Delaney was reminded to fulfill the promise he made at age 8. He pledged to preach God's word.

"My grandmother told me I could not take it back, because I made a promise to God," he said.

In 1992, Shell offered separation packages, which Delaney accepted. He sold real estate and continued his studies at Houston Graduate School of Theology.

Meanwhile, South Park needed a pastor.

"I did not have educational qualifications to pastor. They put two names on the ballot. My name was not on the ballot when the members voted. But when they announced the elected pastor, I found I had 348 write-in votes," said Delaney.

"I accepted my calling to the ministry then they licensed me. Our church doesn't ordain a person unless he or she is being called to pastor somewhere," he said.

Delaney previously joined South Park in 1976 and served as a deacon. He moved to the area in 1969. He began foreign missioning in 1988 to Haiti, Jamaica and Colombia.

Delaney continues teaching Computer Science through contract work with HCC. He teaches 9 a.m.-noon Mondays and Wednesdays at HCC West Loop Center.