



The Rev. Gary Newton of the Congregational Bible Church in front of his street hockey team.

## Newton spends little time preaching

What is the most important function of a Christian minister?

A lot of people if asked that question would quickly reply, "Preaching."

But preaching is not the main function of the Rev. Gary C. Newton, Pastor of Youth in Christian Education at Congregational Bible Church in Marietta. Gary is more likely to playing street hockey or climbing a mountain with a backpack strapped to him, than to be preaching.

One of Gary's most important tasks is working with the youth of Marietta who do not go to church. At the Youth Center on Front Street kids play basketball, shoot pool, play ping pong, lift weights, or play table games. One afternoon each week they play street hockey at the Community Center on Market Street, and it is hard to distinguish the youthful pastor with a hockey stick in hand from his energetic and not very pious looking flock.

In the summer Gary can be found hiking with a small group of Marietta kids, camping out, sleeping under the stars, cooking meals over an open fire. Or, the minister might be diving with the kids into the Chiques Creek.

What does all this athletic activity have to do with the Lord's work, you might ask.

The eventual goal of all the sports is, in Gary's words, "to lead the kids to Christ." First, however, trust and respect must be built between the youth and Gary, or between the youth and the 25 volunteers from the church who make the program possible.

Actually, Gary spends most of his time training the volunteers to work with the youth and supervising all the many activities with youth in the church.

Each adult volunteer works with only an average of three adolescents or pre-adolescents. To build

effective trust and respect between the kids and their leaders the ratio of kids to leaders must be small; otherwise, an individual child would not get sufficient attention from his or her leader.

Some of the most effective leaders were without any connections with the church when they were youths. Their similar adolescent experiences with the youth contributes to their understanding of the problems of the youths.

The process of bringing the kids to Christ goes in stages. First, says Gary, "We show them that we love them. Next, we show them that God loves them. Finally, we want them to commit themselves to God."

The process takes a very long time. "It takes two or three years just to build relationships of trust with the kids," Gary says.

After the fun and games every night, there is Bible study, but the Bible study is not compulsory, and some of the kids do not stay for it.

Only a few of the 75 kids who participate in the youth activities in Marietta have joined the church since Gary and his wife Cheryl Joy came here in June, 1977.

Gary's other activities at the church, in addition to working with the youth of Marietta, are supervising the Vacation Bible School each summer, and two summer camps, one at Tel-Hai near Honey Brook and the other at Circle T north of Ephrata. He is also responsible for supervising the Sunday School program and a Wednesday night youth program.

Gary was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and grew up in London, Ontario, in Canada.

He studied at Houghton College, a Christian liberal arts college located south of Buffalo. It was there he met Cheryl Joy Sheperdson, who

is now Mrs. Gary Newton.

While at Houghton Gary worked for the Salvation Army as a youth and street worker.

His senior year in college he was pastor in a small country church.

After graduating from Houghton with a bachelor's degree in Christian education and psychology, he went to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago. While a student in the Seminary, he interned at Houghton College, his alma mater, where he taught courses in discipleship training and counselling for Christian growth.

During this internship at Houghton, he and Cheryl Joy were married.

He was graduated from the seminary in June, 1977, with an M.A., and came that same month to begin his ministry in Marietta.


In 1978 he was ordained as a minister.

His wife, Cheryl Joy, attended graduate school at Millersville State College after moving to Marietta and received a master's degree in psychology. She works with Gary in counselling youth.

The Newton's son Joel was born this past July, 1979.

Gary's hobbies are skiing, swimming and camping. He also jogs four miles every day.





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