



## WE NOMINATE

Virgil Miller Newton, probably the youngest pastor in these United States, who as a Princeton University undergraduate has assumed year-round responsibility for administering to the spiritual needs of three small Methodist Churches within 30 miles of Nassau Hall. This month—days before observing his 19th birthday—Newton will be starting his second year of “duality”, combining a full-time sophomore schedule with his duties as a self-described “old Methodist circuit rider”. Although he holds the title of “student supply pastor”, he has been given special authorization by the appropriate authorities to preach, marry, bury, baptize and serve communion.

An intense, level-headed young man personifying the Methodist Church's belief that a man must be “called to preach the Word of God”, Newton was licensed to preach by the Florida Methodist Conference during his senior year at Sewanee Military Academy when he was 17. A year ago, in his pre-college summer, he gained his initial practical experience by understudying vacationing ministers in his native Tampa and in St. Petersburg, Fla. His ability and enthusiasm led his District Superintendent in Florida to notify his New Jersey counterpart that Newton would be glad to be of service while studying at Princeton. There was urgent need for help on the “Imlaystown Circuit” and Newton, just 18, “took over” the struggling Imlaystown, Clarksburg and Emley's Hill parishes.

The son of one of Florida's topnotch newspapermen (a former president of the Associated Press Managing Editors' Association) and the first minister in his family in almost a century, Newton had decided upon

the ministry as early as sophomore year in high school. Since then his objective has been a broad humanistic education culminated by ordination in the Methodist Church and eventually a parish in the Southeastern States. Indicative of his deep-rooted interest in his current assignments was his refusal this summer to permit his churches “to change horses in midstream”. He remained on the job for the bulk of the summer recess, shifting his residence from parish to parish and maintaining the momentum of growth developed earlier in the year.

Newton's routine during the academic year is as absorbing as it must be exhausting. He admits that pastoral obligations “detract a little” from his studies. Yet he thinks nothing of preparing three 20- to 40-minute sermons each week, of remaining on call at all times, and of devoting weekends to working with young people and visiting parishioners. On a normal Sunday he will deliver what one observer terms “three, dynamic, sincere sermons”—at 9:30, 11:00 and 2:30. In his churches, as he seeks to put across his messages with fluent, unpracticed gestures, children are often scampering through the congregation. This bothers him not a whit, for he insists: “I would rather have the children there, and screaming, than not have their parents in church at all.”

For portraying Christianity as a “warm, personal, living religion”; for depicting the role of the preacher in these straightforward words: “If you can't get them there, they can't be made Christians and they can't be made better”; for understanding all that is connoted by The Golden Rule; he is **Town Topics'** nominee for

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