

# ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Olive Prowse

## 49: Abbey Street Methodist Church

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Towards the end of the 18th century the Methodists of Dublin were feeling the need of a chapel on the north side of the city, convenient to the new development around Mountjoy Square. The old Lutheran chapel on Marlborough Street, which

had been used intermittently, was thought unsuitable, and in any case could only be rented. Gravel Walk (later called Blackhall Place) was too far west, and was largely used by the soldiers from the barracks. They found a site in Great Charles Street. Alas for

them, this passed at the division in 1816 into the hands of the Primitive Wesleyans, and they had to look again. In 1820 they began to build on Lower Abbey Street.

The chapel was opened on 3 June 1821, when the preacher was the Rev Dr Adam Clarke. The membership was affected by the cholera plague of 1849, which followed the Great Famine, but it did not diminish the zeal of the Abbey Street congregation. It was then the most fashionable Methodist congregation in the city, and used Wesley's adaptation of the Book of Common Prayer. Towards the end of the century it established new societies at Clontarf and Clonliffe.

In 1901/02 the premises was completely rebuilt enabling activities to widen, and so accommodate young people coming to work in Dublin. The Christian Endeavour Society, Badminton Club, Boy Scout Troop, Girl Guide Company and what would later be the MWA were formed. During the

First World War a Soldiers' Rendezvous was established, where fellowship was provided, together with writing materials, reading and rest rooms, and a Temperance Bar, where for 'one penny' tea and refreshments were available. The church was spared damage in the Easter Rising, for which there was a special Thanksgiving Service on Sunday 4 June 1916.

Abbey Street was again re-designed to accommodate the Dublin Central Mission, and on 8 June 1963 was reopened. The new design enabled us to extend facilities to, among others, the Salvation Army, Alcoholics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous. Sheltered housing and a nursing home were built at Sandymount and Glenageary. The recent influx of overseas members, some already Methodists, has given us all a wonderful lift. We feel that the hand of God is very evident in our history, and with the continuance of this we look forward to the future with enthusiasm.