

ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

90: Lisburn Road Methodist Church

Text: Mary Uprichard



Lisburn Road Methodist Church (now Belfast South Methodist) celebrates 100 years of worship and witness in June 2006.

In 1900 both Methodist churches at University Road and Balmoral were full and the neighbourhood was still developing. Consequently the Quarterly Meeting of University Road Church made a decision to purchase a site on the Lisburn Road. The foundation stones of what was to be known as a Hall-chapel were laid on 17 February 1906 and the new Methodist

Church was dedicated on 16 June 1906. It had been built for the modest sum of £1,550.

The pioneers of the work intended eventually to build a church to accommodate 700. However with the intervention of the First World War and the subsequent movement of population outwards, a larger building proved unnecessary and in 1922 a temporary hall was added to facilitate youth work.

Through the years a congregation of spiritual

strength and virility developed. Born in an evangelical effort, the Lisburn Road congregation steadily maintained an interest in evangelism over the years.

The Hall-chapel had long since come to be accepted as the church proper, though it never was adequately equipped as a centre for worship. On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee in 1956 it was transformed into an inviting sanctuary, equipped for the worship of God. In 1965 a new suite of halls replaced the old temporary halls.

By the late nineties pastoral and social concerns in South Belfast challenged the circuit to action and gave rise to much heart-searching, discussion and research relating to the future of Methodist worship and mission in the area. This led to a renewed sense of witness and mission.

The two congregations of the Belfast South circuit merged in May 2003, when a symbolic walk took place from University

Road Church to Lisburn Road Church, on Pentecost Sunday. At this time a decision was also taken to proceed with the sale of University Road Church premises.

As ideas about future mission to the area were developed it became clear that the existing premises which have served the congregation so well for a century are no longer appropriate for its future work.

The challenge faced in 2006 and beyond is, with God's help and guidance, how best to redevelop the Lisburn Road site to provide relevant modern mission and outreach facilities in an ever-changing society and to make the church vibrant and relevant to the present age.

It has therefore been decided to use the resources generated from the sale of the University Road property to redevelop the Lisburn Road site.

We celebrate the past while embracing the future in faith.