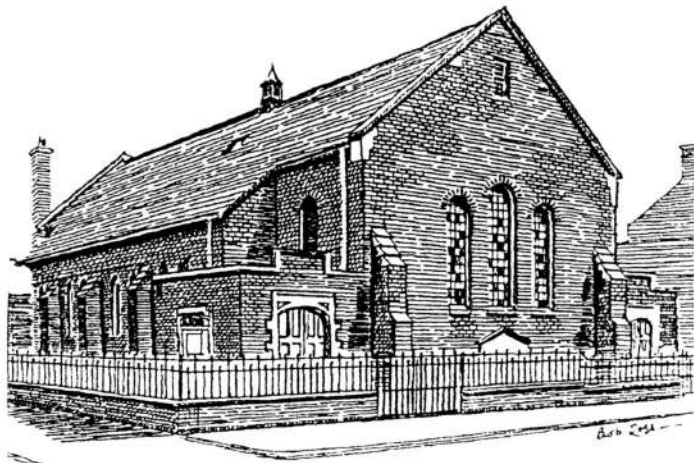


# ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Bob Ross



Two of our city missions can claim parentage of Woodvale Church. The cause at Woodvale is an original offspring of the Belfast Central Mission. The Rev George Thompson, a supernumerary minister at the BCM, presided over

the inauguration of Woodvale Methodism when a site at Cambrai Street off Belfast's Shankill Road was first acquired. Providentially the old Belfast Exhibition Hall on Ormeau Road was being dismantled. It was bought and transported across the

## 44: Woodvale Methodist Church

Text: George Loane

city. When re-erected it had a seating capacity for more than 1,000 people. Falling on hard times, it ceased to function in 1897 and was closed down.

In 1898 the Rev William Maguire successfully proposed to Conference the establishment of the North Belfast Mission, this to include a Woodvale Society. The first minister to be appointed to Woodvale was the Rev Richard Green in that same year.

Illustrious clerical names feature thereafter in the roll of those who have served the Woodvale congregation.

In 1938 the Rev John Fleming was succeeded by Rev Eric Gallagher, during whose ministry the present Church was built. It was opened in April 1940. The use of the boiler house of the Church as an air-raid shelter by the people in the

surrounding streets during the blitz of 1941 has become legendary.

The year 1993 saw a radical alteration take place at the premises. A stained glass partition was installed at the back of the church to provide an additional well appointed room/foyer. This has proved a valuable and versatile asset, adding considerable enhancement to the building.

A faithful congregation continues to worship in the lovely church while the comfortable facilities provided in the church hall are availed of by the various activities catering for all age groups. In a difficult, secular environment the Methodist people at Woodvale remain in good heart as they endeavour to bear a consistent Christian witness.