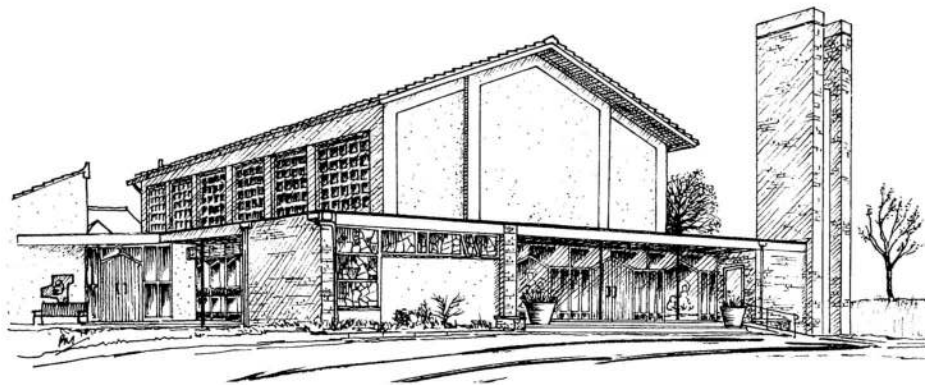


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

34: Carnalea Methodist Church

Text: George E Orr



The work at Carnalea had its beginnings in a week-night meeting in the local station-house of the Belfast and County Down Railway. The station-master, William McDade, had been converted during a mission conducted by W P Nicholson in 1923, and had set up a weekly meeting for Bible study, prayer and worship in his home. He and his family were members of the Queen's Parade Society and when, in 1929, that Society decided to promote outreach in the developing Carnalea area, the group who met in his home became the nucleus of the new cause.

Very soon it became necessary to find a more suitable, if still temporary, place for meeting than the station-house. After some difficulties the now formally established Carnalea Society had its opening meeting in a rented building known as 'The Beresford Cafe', hired at a cost of ten shillings a week.

The new Society prospered and a purpose-built church was opened in 1935. A series of supernumerary ministers had pastoral care of the congregation until, in 1965, Conference appointed a Junior Minister, the Rev John Nelson, to Carnalea.

By the following year plans had been developed and money had been raised to build a new church at Rathmore Road. Following a three-year delay because of problems with the ground lease, the cost had escalated to a prohibitive extent and the Leaders felt unable to continue with the venture.

At this time of crisis, the Vestry of the Church of Ireland Parish of St Gall invited the Society to share the use of their church, which had been opened three years earlier. In return the Church of Ireland would make use of the new Methodist halls at Rathmore Road for their organisations. What began as an experiment in joint use in February 1970 soon became a permanent and successful partnership.

Today the work in Carnalea, part of the Queen's Parade, Carnalea and Primacy Circuit, continues to prosper. The Society has recently appointed a Youth Pastor and has organised a series of six Alpha Courses attended by a total of about eighty people. These courses have led to a programme of monthly house groups at which there is an attendance of about fifty members.