

ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

73: Cregagh Methodist Church

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In 1894 a temporary Methodist Church was erected at Clara Street, on the Castlereagh Road, Belfast. Before long it was too small for services, Sunday School and other activities. The building also deteriorated rapidly due to its type of structure. At a

Leaders' Meeting on 8 January 1912 it was decided to build a new church on another site. However, hopes and plans of the leaders and members to erect a building adequate for the needs and challenges of the early years of the 20th century

met with many disappointments and set-backs. The onset of the First World War and the considerable expenditure were major obstacles.

In the spring of 1923 an option was taken on a site on the Cregagh Road, where there was a large and steadily increasing population, and approval was obtained from the District Synod for the erection of a new church. Considerable financial support was promised from the Forward Movement Fund, which had been set up to cope with problems of church extension arising out of the growth of population in the City of Belfast.

This support enabled arrangements to be made for the signing of an agreement regarding the site and the preparation of building plans. Eventually the Cregagh church

was opened on 28 May 1927 at a cost of £9,379.

Because of the tremendous growth in church membership the initial building work was followed by the addition of auxiliary church halls in 1933, and a separate building – the Smiley Hall – in 1939. The rapid growth of work among young people in the late 1950s and 1960s inspired a scheme for the erection of a Youth Centre incorporating the Smiley Hall and additional rooms in 1972.

In the past 30 years no major building has been undertaken, but presently proposals for a Building Regeneration Project are under consideration to enable the Church to demonstrate God's love in the community in ways which are relevant and effective, and to leave a legacy for future generations.