

# ROUND THE CHURCHES 77: Donegall Road Methodist Church

Drawing: Unknown

Text: Thomas Clarke



The seeds of Methodism in the Donegall Road area can be traced back to the end of the 1800s when there were cottage meetings in the area and also to work in a mission hall in Tierney Street. At that time the work came under the direction of the Superintendent in Sandy Row.

Following a mission on the Donegall Road held by the Rev R T Agnew and a Sandy Row local preacher called Robert Dixon (or Dickson), the work was consolidated onto the present site on the Donegall Road that had

been secured by an earlier Superintendent minister of Sandy Row at a cost of £600.

The Tierney Street hall was removed to the Donegall Road site and was enlarged to meet the needs of the growing congregation. It was opened as Donegall Road Methodist Church on Sunday 26 September 1902. The new church came to be known as 'Tin Top' because of its corrugated iron roof. Membership was drawn from the new converts following the mission held by the members of the Tierney Street hall.

A day school was opened on the church premises just weeks later and this operated out of church premises for several years. It too enjoyed the name 'Tin Top' because of the roof. The school opened with 23 pupils and one teacher but by September 1905 the foundation stone was being laid for a new school with 260 pupils and four teachers!

By 1906 the Sunday School had over 400 pupils and by 1925 plans were in hand for a new church building. The new church was opened in 1927 at a cost of £10,000. It was also in 1927 that the Cullen Hall was opened. The England Memorial Hall was added in 1960.

The 'Troubles' took an early toll on Donegall Road Methodist Church when the church was severely damaged by a fire

believed to have been caused by a petrol bomb. Remodelling of the layout was undertaken along with the repair work but it was three years before the new-look church, with its reduced seating capacity, was reopened for public worship. The reopening and rededication took place on Friday 23 June 1972.

During the ministry of the Rev Jim Lemon in the early 1990s major refurbishment of the church halls took place. Government funding was secured for this as the church shared in the community work of Southcity, who in turn made use of the newly-refurbished premises.

In 2002 the church celebrated its centenary with a number of events including an open day and a family fun day. Much of the information contained in this short history was researched for these centenary celebrations.

Much has changed in church life and society during these 103 years but two things haven't: the human need for God, and God's desire to make His love known to humanity. That is why the Leaders of Donegall Road Methodist Church continue to seek out how best the rich heritage and their present gifts can be best used to further the work of His Kingdom in the Donegall Road area.