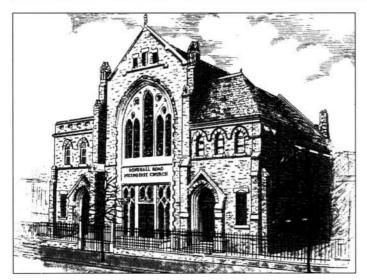
## **ROUND THE CHURCHES**

## 58: Donegall Road Methodist Church

Drawing: Ulster Weavers Text: Derek Johnston



The Methodist witness was already established in the Sandy Row area before the end of the 1890s. A mission hall was erected in Tierney Street, which was in operation for ten years. Around the opening of the 1900s, having

already procured a plot of land on the Donegall Road through the efforts of a previous Superintendent, the Rev James Kirkwood, the Sandy Row Quarterly Board approved plans to remove the mission hall from Tierney Street to the new site. This cost £600.

After enlargement and reerection, the mission hall was opened as Donegall Road Methodist Church in September 1902. The nucleus of the congregation was partly people from Tierney Street, and partly converts from a tent mission. The church was nicknamed 'Tin Top' because of its corrugated iron roof. A day school was opened in the following month with 23 pupils. By 1905 there were 260 pupils, and a new school was built. In 1906 there were over 400 children in the Sunday School.

Closing services for 'Tin Top' church were held in January 1926. The congregation held their services in the Railwaymen's Mission Hall. The new church was opened in January 1927, when the minister was the

Rev R C Roddie. It was built to accommodate 650 people. Membership was over 300, and the Sunday School had 480 on roll. The Cullen Hall was added in 1937, and the England Hall in 1960

In 1969 the church was severely damaged in what was believed to be a petrol bomb attack, and was out of use for three years. In the early 1990s the premises were refurbished and altered to accommodate a programme of social outreach under the name Southcity. This operates an Open Learning Centre. New Deal and Worktrack programmes, Playgroup, CAB, and an Out of School Club. A faithful congregation continues to worship here each Sunday, and looks forward to working together with God in the coming years.