

# ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray



Grosvenor House, the headquarters of the Belfast Central Mission and home of the Grosvenor Hall congregation, was opened in 1997. It is the third purpose-built home of the Mission on its site between Grosvenor Road and Glengall Street in central Belfast.

When the Mission was

founded in 1889 it had as a major aim the provision of facilities in which those who had little contact with church would feel comfortable. It started with temporary homes, including a mission tent and Ginnet's Circus, before the first Grosvenor Hall was opened in 1894. In 1927 the second

## 75: Grosvenor House

Text: Donald P Ker

Grosvenor Hall, a larger and more solid construction, followed. This Hall became widely known throughout the city of Belfast and the Methodist Connexion. However the change in city centre church attendance and the effect of recurring damage to the property as a result of city centre bombing campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s meant that a new type of building was needed, and so Grosvenor House was built.

The aim of having premises in which all people can feel welcome is still to the fore. The Scallop Shell Restaurant, to the front of the building is popular and friendly. As well as providing offices which support the wide variety of Mission projects, Grosvenor House is a conference and training venue, widely used by church and community. In a busy week up to 3,000 people can come through its doors.

At the heart of the building

and the Mission's life is a worshipping, praying congregation. The main hall, which is used for Sunday worship and monthly Wednesday evening healing services, illustrates Fred Pratt Green's lines, 'Here are table, font and pulpit; Here the cross has central place.' At the same time it lends itself easily to 'worship in the round'. The Gallagher Chapel, which seats 20, is space set apart for daily prayer as well as midweek Holy Communion. Light comes into the Gallagher Chapel through the Bell memorial window, a window originally situated in Donegall Square Church, which depicts Christ in Gethsemane and is the work of the outstanding Irish artist Patrick Pye. It is significant that the door to the Mission's drop-in advice centre is immediately opposite the door to the chapel. Worshipping God and caring for others, no matter who they are, belong together.