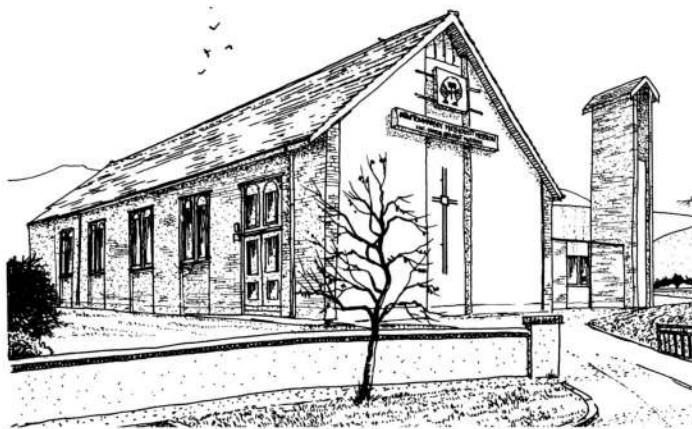


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

39: Rathcoole Methodist Church

Text: Duncan Alderdice



In October 1953 the North Belfast Mission and the Church Extension Committee began work in Rathcoole where families from the York Street area of Belfast were being rehoused. Many of those families depended on the Mission for material and spiritual support. At first services were held in Rantalard House near the entrance to the estate.

In February 1955 a dual-purpose building was opened for worship and youth activities. The work developed rapidly and a scheme to

were proceeded with. The North Belfast Mission's property was vested and the Mission transferred to Rathcoole.

A long period of negotiation with the statutory authorities concluded with an agreement granting equivalent re-instatement for the York Street property and the finance was made available for new buildings for mission purposes at Rathcoole. The existing site there was enlarged by the purchase of a portion of adjoining land from the Housing

convert the existing building into a Church and to erect a new hall was approved. The suite of the new and altered buildings was opened in December 1963.

In Belfast, in the early seventies, plans for a ring road and motorway which involved demolition of buildings and the clearing of the York Street area

Executive. The building scheme included the alteration and refurbishment of existing halls.

The new suite of buildings which are the Rathcoole premises today was opened and dedicated on 2 September 1978. The Worship Centre is designed as an amphitheatre suitable for a variety of activities. The entrance foyer provides a spacious assembly area equipped with a coffee bar, book-stall and other facilities. There is an extensive kitchen equipped to provide a full meals service and additional rooms for Fellowship Meetings and small groups.

In the life of a church or mission, buildings exist to be places where faith and hope are created, where people are trained in Christian discipleship and from which they go out to live and serve as the people of God in the local community. A few months ago the *Newsletter* contained a report on the extensive work of the Mission today and its vision for the future. Like its forerunner, the North Belfast Mission in York Street, the objective of the Newtownabbey Methodist Mission based in Rathcoole is to minister to people's need through practical help and the offer of God's grace in the saving friendship of His Son.