

Out of the ashes



Ponsanooth lies halfway between Redruth and Falmouth, Cornwall. A Wesleyan society was established in the late eighteenth century but struggled until the arrival of William Carvosso in 1788 as the tenant of a local farm. With little success at first but by dint of prayer and commitment, with great joy he records, 'It pleased the Lord to convince and convert a few souls and add them to our little number.' Soon Carvosso was leading two large classes and preaching twice a week.

In the first forty years of the nineteenth century this community of Christians grew so rapidly that they had to build and rebuild their chapel three times! The present building, which originally seated more than 600 worshippers, was built in 1843, followed by a Sunday School in 1893.

This second building, which burnt down in 2008, was rebuilt and re-opened in 2014 as Ponsanooth Hall, a modern facility for the whole community. Owned by the Methodist Church, it is leased to a limited company that has responsibility for its running and maintenance.

Part of the design brief for the rebuilding was that it should be as multi-purpose as possible. Today a weekly toddlers' group and a café, open three days a week, are happily staffed by church members and those who would hardly ever attend church. During the winter monthly film and pizza nights are the church's gift to village children; in the summer there are street games on the playing field. At our recent Harvest Festival daffodil bulbs were potted up by the children to give to elderly and isolated people during Christmas carol singing.

Ponsanooth Hall now hosts around 15,000 people each year. The church, small in number, has been a catalyst to bring further unity to the community through serving one another and, in the words of one local person, 'It is truly a pleasure to be involved'.

Over recent years it has become increasingly difficult to sustain 'church' as those of an older generation knew it. The days are gone when a preacher addressed people under a distant gallery. Currently the small congregation primarily worships 'in the round' at the rear of the chapel but meets once a month in the hall for a café-style service followed by lunch together attended by double the usual number.

Our next challenge is to find a sustainable use for our large Grade II* listed Chapel; any ideas welcome!

As a small church community we are committed to growing in relationship with each other and with God, developing a culture that encourages people to share their faith journey with one another, to cry together and to love one another. And we continue to pray William Carvosso's prayer, that the Lord would 'convince and convert a few souls and add them to our little number.'

Christopher Trewern

Member of Ponsanooth Methodist Church and a director of Ponsanooth Hall Management Company
chris.trewern@gmail.com
ponsanooth-hall.co.uk

This article first appeared in Country Way 80: Building Community, February 2019. Go to germinate.net/country-way for more information about how to subscribe.