

## Working Practices Document

This document sets out the general working practices of *Signs of God*.

### Aims

- To advance the use of British Sign Language in Christian settings
- To promote and enable the full participation in the Christian faith of people who use British Sign Language

### Beliefs, Values and Commitments

- Respect for BSL as a language
- Respect for Deaf people as the primary users of BSL
- Respect for the culture of BSL users
- Belief that the Gospel is for everyone so all have a right to equal access
- Belief that all Christians are called to ministry. Some are called to leadership roles
- Belief that people have the right to access Christian Churches of any denomination
- Commitment to team working as a Gospel pattern, following the example of Jesus
- Commitment to “apprenticing”
- Commitment to consultation
- Commitment to encouragement and positive criticism
- Commitment to partnership working

These beliefs, values and commitments will be upheld in all the activities of *Signs of God*.

### Activities

We offer a variety of training events suitable for Deaf and hearing people:

- Residential workshops or Training Events using BSL throughout
- Professional Training for Interpreters
- Single-Day Workshops open to people with any level of BSL skill
- Single-Day Workshops for specific skills
- Summer Schools
- Training for professional BSL/English interpreters

We also:

- Manage a register of Christian Sign Language Interpreters
- Facilitate the provision of teams for Christian events and conferences
- Provide advice and information for churches, organisations and individuals seeking access for Deaf people
- In some instances act as consultants to churches, organisations or individuals
- Make information available via our website and newsletter
- From time to time engage in fundraising activities

### Workshops

- *Signs of God* endeavours to provide Deaf and hearing tutors working together in teams at all workshops
- Where circumstances and resources allow, *Signs of God* aims to have interpretation at workshops provided by dedicated interpreters whose role throughout the workshop is to interpret. This does not apply to Summer Schools where interpretation may be by the ‘intern’ interpreter group

Aims of Workshops/Training Events:

- To help participants to know their limitations and potential
- To challenge participants to *go on* thinking!

- To provide a safe environment in which skills can be developed and challenged

Residential themed workshops are run as follows:

- The convenors of the workshops will always be fluent users of British Sign Language. These may be Deaf people or experienced and qualified BSL/English interpreters working in the field of Christian interpreting or other hearing people, fluent in BSL who work within a Christian setting
- There will always be a sign language consultant present. This will be a Deaf Person who uses BSL as their first or preferred language, and who has teaching skills
- In addition there will usually be other specialists such as experts in Liturgy, Doctrine or Biblical Studies
- Participants must be self-motivated. They are expected to bring to the workshop items that they wish to discuss
- All discussion is in sign language

Summer Schools offer people a more intensive period of learning

- The tutor teams at Summer Schools will be made up of Deaf and hearing tutors
- There may be opportunity for students with higher levels of BSL to work as 'intern' interpreters. This will involve interpreting some sessions, after which feedback will be given
- There will be a daily act of worship
- Students with no skill in sign language will not be accepted into Summer Schools
- Participants make use of each other's skills and knowledge as well as those of the consultants and convenors

Day workshops are run as follows:

One appropriately experienced and skilled team member will be appointed "Team Leader" for the workshop. He/She will be responsible for deciding the programme based on the needs of the participants. He/She will also allocate responsibilities to team members.

Day workshops will always include the following:

- Introduction to *Signs of God* and explanation of the aims of the organisation
- A short presentation by a Deaf person about an aspect of their Christian faith. This could be testimony or account of worship or an aspect of Church life
- An act of culturally appropriate worship
- Training offered to participants in groups according to signing skills

### **Training for Professional BSL/English Interpreters**

- Trainers will be those with appropriate and proven skills

Other types of training may be offered if the need arises

### **The Christian Interpreter Network**

- *Signs of God* will maintain a list of Christian Interpreters and make it available to organisations and individuals at the discretion of the Administrator
- On request, *Signs of God* may advertise the need for interpreters at Christian events and conferences that support our aims.
- *Signs of God* is not an interpreting agency and as such cannot guarantee to provide interpreters to any event organisers who request them.
- If interpreters are booked by event organisers through *Signs of God* advertisements or the Christian Interpreters list, *Signs of God* cannot be held responsible for the conduct and quality of these interpreters

- *Signs of God* has guidelines available for the use of BSL/English Interpreters at Christian Conferences. Otherwise, enquirers will be directed to the Sign Me In! Document available from Go! Sign (Christian Deaf Link UK)

### **Interpreting Teams**

- *Signs of God* may coordinate teams of interpreters for Christian events and conferences that support our aims.
- Teams will be led by an interpreter who has met the National Interpreting Standards or equivalent
- As far as possible this team leader will also be experienced and/or trained in leading a team
- The teams will provide opportunities for apprenticing of interpreters and will often include the chance for monitoring of and feedback to all involved in the team
- The standards within teams will aim to meet the standards of the Sign Me In! policy document

### **Charity Business**

#### Conduct of meetings

- Meetings will be held in BSL whenever there are Deaf people present. Where possible reports and actions from the meeting should be recorded on video as well as in text-based minutes
- If no Deaf people are present, meetings may be conducted in English. *Signs of God* shall endeavour to produce a summary of meetings recorded in BSL in addition to any minutes in English. In order to ensure accuracy of these minutes and summaries, these BSL recordings should be recorded by a *Signs of God* member who was present at the meeting
- If participants in the meeting are not proficient or confident in BSL, interpreters may be provided. This should be decided on an individual basis and should, where possible, still allow the majority of the meeting to take place in BSL. If this is a formal situation, the interpreters should be booked specifically for this purpose and should not be members of the meeting used on an ad-hoc basis, who may wish to contribute to the discussion

#### Procedures of Trustees meetings/Conduct of Trustees

- Deaf and hearing people should be involved in all *Signs of God's* decision-making processes. As such, *Signs of God* aims to have a minimum number of Deaf trustees in post. At the time of writing this minimum is set at one Deaf trustee, but this position will be reviewed annually by members at the AGM
- Trustees will aim to meet on at least 2 occasions every year
- Trustees must comply with Charity Law, as set down in the Governing Document, and their conduct should be in accordance with this

#### Members

- All members are expected to have a current Advanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. CRB checks undertaken for other relevant work which are less than three years old will be acceptable
- As stated in the *Signs of God* Constitution, members are those who are actively working for or contributing in some way to the organisation

#### Financial Gifts and Expenses

- Financial gifts for tutors and interpreters working for *Signs of God* are agreed upon at the AGM (as stated in the *Signs of God* Constitution)
- These gifts will only be given where a workshop breaks even or makes a surplus

- Expenses will be paid for those travelling to *Signs of God* meetings (including trustees meetings). This does not apply to the AGM, where members are expected to pay their own travel. *Signs of God* trustees will consider paying travel for members who find the expense of travelling to the AGM prohibitive and would otherwise not be able to attend

#### Administration

- The administrator is empowered to incur expenditure within the approved budget to a limit of £200 per single item.

#### **Working in Partnership**

- *Signs of God* is open to working in partnership with organisations that support our Values, Beliefs, and Commitments

#### **Policies**

*Signs of God* has the following policies and documents, which are available on request:

- Guide to Good Practice for using Sign Language Interpreters at Christian Events
- Guidelines for Sign Language Interpreters working at Christian Events
- Complaints Procedure
- Reserves Policy
- Cancellation Policy
- Child Protection Statement
- Health and Safety Guidelines (for guidance only)

Other policies and documents will be developed from time to time as the need arises