

Signs of God information sheet.
Interpreting at a Service of Infant Baptism in the Church of England

Information to find out:

Which service? The Baptism may take place within the context of a Parish Service, or as a separate service.
Which Hymns?
Which Bible readings?
Which Prayers?
Full names of the child/children

Text of Minister's sermon, if any.
Text of any poem or songs that will be used

Practical considerations:

A Baptism Service usually involves a procession to the font for the actual Baptism. The Interpreter needs to agree a sensible place to stand where the parents and godparents can see him/her and not in the way of the Minister taking the baby.

The Minister may invite the parents/godparents to stand or to come to the front for the vows they have to make. If space allows, they should stand to one side and at an angle so they can still see the interpreter and the congregation can see their responses if they are signed.

The Minister needs to understand that Signed responses may take slightly longer than spoken responses. He/she should be aware of this before moving on in the service.

Language issues

The concept of "repeat after me" for the vows may need some explaining. The parents and godparents may make their vows in spoken English or BSL with appropriate interpreter support.

The preface to the blessing over the waters of baptism is usually quite long and contains references to the work of the Spirit in creation, the saving work of God as he led his people through the waters of the Red Sea, and the baptism of Jesus. The prayer ends with reference to the waters of baptism that will be used on this occasion. It is sensible to prepare this prayer thoroughly since it is usually said quite fast!

The sign for "Baptism" changes according to the practice of the Church that is baptising. In the Church of England it is usual to lean the baby over the water and sprinkle water over his/her head either with the hand or a shell.

NB It is likely that the minister will not have used a Sign Language Interpreter before so be ready to do some "cross-cultural" educating! You may find it useful to give him/her the *Signs of God* briefing paper written for ministers.