



**Featuring**  
Workshop reviews



**Save the date!**  
What could it be...?



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Remembering a  
great tutor & friend

# NEWSLETTER

Greetings from Signs of God - welcome to our 2019 workshops edition

## *Signs of God*

*British Sign Language in Christian Settings  
Training and Exploration*

### Greetings from the Chair

Spring is very much in the air, and it's great to see more of the sun peeping through the clouds!

The trustees hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter, focused on the great work that happens through our workshops. A big thank you to those in the core team that help this essential work to benefit so many people!

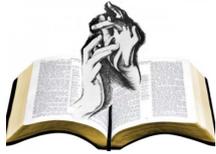
Make sure to book yourself in for our upcoming dates, so you and your work amongst Deaf people can benefit from all you will learn.

God bless you. *Sarah Tupling - Chair of Trustees*



### Did someone mention workshops? Is one coming to your area in 2019?

At Signs of God, we aim to advance the use of British Sign Language in Christian settings and to promote and enable full participation in the Christian faith of people who use British Sign Language. One way we achieve this is providing opportunities for people to explore BSL and how to use it in a Christian context. We offer high quality training, at affordable prices, whatever your needs. We welcome Deaf and hearing people to participate in all our training events. Open to anyone, with any level of sign language skills, or none! Held anywhere in the UK at the request of a church or local group. Read on to learn more about what we offer and consider hosting one in your area. Enjoy. 



## The Bible through Deaf eyes Sept 2018 review by Ruth Burnett

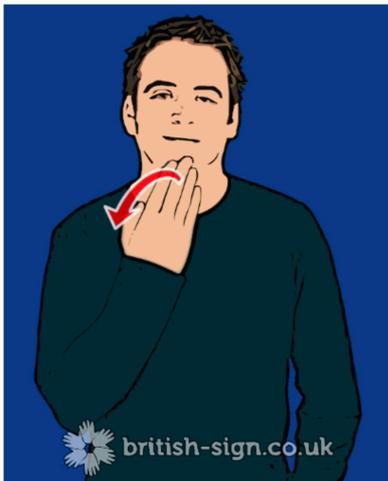
Hi I'm Ruth, I live in Warwickshire and have been a Christian for 44 years. I currently attend Coventry Deaf Church and Word of Hands services in Birmingham.

I loved the title of the workshop - The Bible through Deaf Eyes. Before the session started, it got me thinking and still helps me to look at the Bible in a different way. There were a variety of teachers, which I enjoyed because it meant the workshop was fun and kept the day flowing well.

Having resources available there for us to see on the day was great and then links were later sent out to us so we could access and continue to use them, which has been really helpful.

The practical activity of trying to translate a passage helped me see which characters were involved and explore the emotions, the culture, the background to the story. It meant that we could practice signing the story visually and not just signing the English words. We were then able to see the Bible passage signed by a translator, which made me realise how much more there is to see in a Bible passage. I particularly liked the way everyone signed the Philemon story. Again it opened my eyes to seeing the Bible in a different way.

I would definitely recommend these types of workshops to anyone and would go again, if travel was easy enough. It would be nice to discuss more Bible scriptures through Deaf eyes; to think about the culture and background of biblical times. Like most people, I've grown up with a picture of Jesus as blonde, blue eyed, meek and mild, from Children's Bibles as they are easy to read when English isn't your first language. But I need to change that. Did Jesus live a healthy lifestyle through food, exercise and meditation? How did Jesus care about nature? Can Deaf people sign in tongues? It would be great to be able to explore these and other topics in a safe environment and with like minded Christians in BSL. Thank you Signs of God for providing these opportunities. I'm looking forward to a next time soon in 2019. 🙌



## THANKS

*Flat hand starts with fingertips on chin. Hand moves down and away from signer.*

### Volunteer news - Thank you!

We have had a couple of changes in our volunteer roles and would like to say a huge thank you to our volunteers who are stepping down.

Roma Parrick, who has served us faithfully as a trustee for three years, stepped down in 2017, however, she remained as a core team member and was the sole coordinator for our workshops. Roma has recently handed the coordinator baton onto Anna Smith and Lucy Dunhill. We take this opportunity to thank Roma for all her hard work, dedication, commitment and excellent admin skills whilst looking after our workshop bookings.

We also say thank you to Heather Peachey, who was responsible for looking after and distributing our merchandise. This is a huge task and takes up a lot of space! Thank you Heather. Heather has passed everything on to Mandy Buddle, thanks so much Mandy! 🙌

### Our contact details

Signs of God is staffed entirely by volunteers, please be patient if you contact us and there is a delay receiving a response.

**Postal address:** 275 Downham Way, Bromley, BR1 5EN

**Emails:** [info@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:info@signsofgod.org.uk), [interpreting@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:interpreting@signsofgod.org.uk), [summerschool@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:summerschool@signsofgod.org.uk) and of course [workshops@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:workshops@signsofgod.org.uk).

**W:** [www.signsofgod.org.uk](http://www.signsofgod.org.uk) **F:** <https://m.facebook.com/SignsOfGodBSL/> **T:** @SignsofGodBSL

**Farnborough Oct 2018 review by Debbie Watkins**



Religion has never really featured in my life.

My early ventures into Brownies and Girl Guides did take me in to a church building, but I only remember the nerves of having to carry the rather hefty flag with the complicated leather belt or the rush to baggy a kneeling cushion. See, I don't even know the correct term for hassock without my trusty Google. So, I've stayed more than an arm's length away from any interpreting work in this area thus far, except the very few bungled attempts to SSE badly through the odd church service here and there. I have always known there's a hole the size of Hampshire in my BSL vocabulary when it comes to religious settings. I just about know a few basic signs and fall over at anything after that.

When I spotted a Signs of God Workshop being held near my hometown, my interest was piqued. It said on the flyer: "All are welcome to join in this workshop, whatever your level of BSL there will be a place for you!"

Bingo, sounded good. Sounded warm. Sounded friendly. Sounded like it could be useful. And all of those things it was. Upon arrival a very warm welcome and introduction from the wonderful Gill Behenna and then some fantastic group work which explored the 'how' and 'why' of interpreting religious text. It was engaging and positive. Fun and uplifting. Nobody was judging each other's BSL or Bible knowledge, it just felt like a fun way to explore what the words meant and ways to convey them to a Deaf audience. (Don't test me on that last part. I only passed the fun and uplifting part.)

There followed some interviews on the stage, where deaf and hearing members of Signs Of God shared their experiences over many years. The exchanges were entertaining and engaging and it was really interesting to see both the hearing and deaf perspectives being discussed with such honesty and transparency.

I left at the end of the day with a fuller bag than when I arrived. I went home stocked up with a feeling of knowledge, peace, kindness, understanding, BSL vocabulary, old friendships rekindled, new friendships made, some prayers, a bit of hope and a sprinkle of love.

Thank you for the day Signs of God, it was everything you said it would be. I highly recommend people attend these workshops.

Ps. I also learnt there are about 15 ways to sign the word Light. Pps. There was free chocolate. 



**Fresh Ground - BSL social**

Michelle Lynam, Associate Pastor at Fresh Ground, Battersea, attended the *Making the Gospel Accessible, London workshop* on 24 November 2018. Fresh Ground is a church, cafe and coffeehouse, and a thriving community hub in Battersea, South London . It is a place where all ages are doing life and faith together. Blanche, one of the baristas, has BSL Level 6 and wanted to combine her love of working with the D/deaf community with her love of Fresh Ground. In September, they started a weekly Deaf Social Meet Up on Tuesday nights, which enables Deaf people and BSL users to meet, socialise and connect with each other.

Michelle commented: "It has been great to work alongside Blanche to create space for members of our community who are Deaf and it has been amazing getting to know new people, hear their stories and learn alongside them. Meeting Deaf people has sparked my own interest in learning sign language and the Signs of God workshop was perfect for getting me started. We are now exploring how we might seek to make Fresh Ground church and community events more accessible for people with hearing loss, use more BSL and make it an even more inclusive place to be."



**Looking for a workshop near you?**

Don't hesitate to contact us regarding workshop enquiries and bookings. Email us at: [workshops@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:workshops@signsofgod.org.uk)



**Save the date! But, whatever for...?**

Keep reading for more info...



### Merchandise

Our travel mugs are available on our website now. Making its debut appearance at Summer School 2018 it's been very

popular ever since. Priced at a mere £8 + p&p, it's a must have whilst out and about. Be cool, go green. Visit our website for more details.



<https://www.signsofgod.org.uk/merchandise>

### CIN - Christian Interpreter Network



First of all, a massive thank you for your continued support by responding to requests going out via CIN. Often these are last minute and for important life events such as weddings and sadly more often funerals.

A quick reminder that before you respond to any request, regardless if it stipulates RSLI/TSLI or Level 6, please carefully consider if you are suitably trained, skilled and experienced for the job, same as you would with any other booking.

On a practical note, please would you check and update your details on the Signs of God directory by logging into your user account on [www.signsofgod.org.uk](http://www.signsofgod.org.uk) or send us an email to: [interpreting@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:interpreting@signsofgod.org.uk)

We would like to encourage those who have achieved BSL Level 6, are either a Trainee or Qualified Interpreter and not yet registered with CIN to do so. It is one way to use the gifts God has given and it is an amazing privilege to serve in this way. 🙌

### Deaf Space Sep 2018 review by June Lush



Hi there. My name is June and I live in a lovely place called South Normanton, Derbyshire and I've been a Christian for over 50 years. I grew up going to the Royal School for the Deaf at Margate and used sign language during term time but when at home, for the holidays,

I was surrounded by hearing people who didn't sign, used minimal gestures and there were no interpreters at all. Over time, I went to the Salvation Army church but there were no interpreters or British Sign Language (BSL) users there. Sometimes, people would write down what the speaker's message was about and although my Christian walk has had ups and downs over the years, I'm still firmly connected to God.

I have always loved music and being part of a hearing church, I was able to enjoy the worship. I remember going to a Billy Graham crusade meeting in 1967 in London, there were interpreters for the Deaf and I saw other Deaf people using sign language communicating together. When I went home, I visited a Deaf church but at that time I couldn't connect, it didn't feel right so I continued going to a hearing church and had access by lip reading and with a BSL communicator. In 1969, I met up with the Deaf Christian Fellowship, where they were all Deaf and used BSL so finally, my husband and I were able to continue our Christian journey with both the Deaf community and hearing community. I feel very blessed to be able to access both and my church continues to have a BSL communicator for the hearing led services.

I attended the Deaf Space workshop and thoroughly enjoyed it. I met up with many different people from all over the UK and we learned so much from each other. I enjoyed being part of the Deaf Christian family that day. I remember looking around and admiring the richness of the language and being able to discuss the Bible and my Christian faith with my brothers and sisters in Christ in BSL. Lots of people were using fingerspelling and signs in a Biblical context and I realised the need for more workshops like this in the future. It is important that the Deaf community have access to the Bible and biblical language in BSL. Discussions were deeper and more visual, there were visual explanations of Bible stories and the biblical text came alive. It was wonderful to see and I am pleased I was able to attend.

I would definitely highly recommend these Deaf workshops to all Deaf people, whether full BSL users, SSE, lip readers etc because it is a safe place to be and a great time of fellowship together; we were able to encourage and support each other to make sure everyone was included. There has been a Deaf Worship workshop and a Deaf Space workshop and I've enjoyed both. I would like to see a Deaf Gospel workshop, to explore and discuss how we can spread the good news in a Deaf centred way, to provide a safe space to make the gospel more visual to encourage more Deaf people to come. Thank you. 🙌



The Word of God brings light to all



**Shining a light in Farnborough Oct 2018**

A mother and daughter duo who attended for the very first time stated "mum paid so I had to go" but on a more serious note said they came because their church group had been given a couple of signing puppets so they wanted to learn signs to be able to use them. They wanted to accurately reflect their church family by being able to welcome all people at their church. Mum had some knowledge of Makaton and so naturally wanted to explore BSL more, especially as they have a deaf service as part of their church community. Mum especially felt that the Signs of God team made her feel welcome and inclusive even though she did not have the signing ability she wanted to and this also gave a small insight as to what it was like not to be able to communicate and still be made to feel included.

Asking a couple of Deaf attendees why they decided to come, it was their very first time too, and they said they just wanted to have a look at what it was like. They felt it was very interesting and enjoyed themselves very much. When asked if they would like to go again there was a resounding YES. One was so captivated with the day and especially at the end when Gill brought the Bible to life as a book of light, said "I felt very emotional, had never seen it like this before". 🙌



## Upcoming workshops

We have capacity to host 5 workshops a year and in 2018 we held events in Stafford, Diss, Farnborough, London and a Deaf Space workshop in Leicester. We are currently planning a number of exciting workshops for 2019 in different areas of the country. Please click here: <https://www.signsofgod.org.uk/events> for further information on these and future events coming up. If you would like to host a workshop in your area please email [workshops@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:workshops@signsofgod.org.uk). See you soon.



### Workshop 1

Theme: Faith Journeys

Whatever your level of BSL there will be a place for you! Come and explore journeys of faith and enjoy using/learning BSL in a Christian context. An experienced team of tutors and interpreters will help you to explore our understanding of the faith journey of characters in the Bible and reflect on our own faith journey. The day will be accessible and suitable for all levels of BSL. Invite your friends and enjoy a day of teaching and practical training in a relaxed environment.

Location: Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire

Date: 29th June 2019

Click here to book: <https://www.signsofgod.org.uk/events/58#booknow>



### Workshop 2

Theme: Accessible Church

This workshop is being hosted by Woodgreen Church in Worcester, a church with a commitment to make themselves more accessible for Deaf people. Others are welcome to join them. The workshop will include groups for beginners as well as groups for advanced signers/interpreters. There will also be chance to learn to sign a couple of songs that are sung at Woodgreen Church on a Sunday. Come along to use/learn BSL in worship and hear/watch inspiring stories from a Deaf perspective.

Location: Worcester

Date: 13th July 2019

Click here to book: <https://www.signsofgod.org.uk/events/60#booknow>

**NB** for registered interpreters: Please note these workshops are informal events open to all. Whilst participants will receive some tuition in the group appropriate to their level, there are also plenary sessions throughout the day. These are NOT certificated professional workshops, although you may choose to claim unstructured CPD hours. Please contact us if you would like to arrange a professional workshop in your region. 



## Making the Gospel Accessible in London Nov 2018

The South England Conference Disability and Diversity Ministry of the Seventh Day Adventist church invited Signs of God to provide a workshop at the prestigious Friends Meeting House in Euston, London.

Deaf people shared their perspective on what makes them feel fully included in church community and we explored ways in which we can communicate the good news visually. Participants divided into groups for teaching sessions appropriate to their level. To conclude the day, we gathered for worship and each group shared what they had been working on. Contributions included the parable of the lost sheep, a praise song, a Christmas Bible reading and group D even brought us a song with a rap!

Here are just a few of the positive comments from participants on the day:

“It was good fun and interactive. Today has given a really good insight into the cultural perspective of a Deaf person. We have realised now that it is more than just signing but there is so much more to it. For example, lip pattern and making it visual. Having a go and then watching others made the meaning clear.”

*JO and RO, Ashted, Group A*

“My main learning today is realising that we are creating a picture and visualising what each Bible scene would have looked like. Thinking about placement – where God is placed, for example. This makes it easier. Today has encouraged me that I can succeed, and I will improve.

*JL, Hounslow, Group B*

“Thank you Signs of God. It is great to be in a Christian setting, learning relevant signs that we can use on a day by day basis.”

*DC, Uxbridge, Group C*

“I enjoyed the day, full of nice people and I felt I learned lots of new things, while having fun.”

*AV, (Deaf participant), Feltham, Group D* 🙋

### Breaking News!!



### Save the date!

Signs of God have some exciting news! Summer School is coming... to a new venue!!

**17th - 23rd August 2020**

**The Hayes Conference Centre,**

**Hayes Lane, Swanwick, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 1AU**



We have been working hard to secure a new venue and are in the last stages of finalising the finer details. Further information to follow shortly. Bookings open later this year. See a glimpse of 2016's event here <https://youtu.be/Qot3INsn2RI>



### Signs of God Annual General Meeting

Signs of God trustees and core team members will be having their AGM on Saturday 1st June in Derby. As the trustees finalise the programme for the day, please join us in prayer for our upcoming events and for our AGM as we seek God's will for the future.





**A tribute to a great friend, tutor and supporter Jerry Hanifin  
by Janice Silo, Trustee**

Jerry was a dear friend, my brother, an enabler, a loyal colleague and a wonderful human being, warts and all.

The first time I was introduced to him, his twinkling eyes captivated me. I met him in the early days of what I would call the “cultural wars” - “Deaf?” or “deaf?” BSL, a language in its own right or just a tool? It was a painful era for some of us who struggled to reclaim their Deaf identity but Jerry was one of the few who did not judge - he would discuss, encourage, uplift and offer positive criticism and guidance.

Through the Royal School for the Deaf Derby, Jerry was invited to teach for a day at a Signs of God event and he would not go unless I went with him. I felt like Deborah in the Bible! But we forget that he was a shy and modest man. Incidentally, it was my first introduction to Signs of God too. There was a priest on this course and Jerry, with his huge respect for the priesthood, felt unable to correct some errors in the priest’s signing so asked me to correct them for him! As time went on, Jerry’s confidence grew and we were all blessed by his expertise.

After I joined Signs of God, I knew Jerry would be a wonderful and powerful addition to not only our BSL tutor teams but also to the general ethos that Signs of God supports and promotes - inclusion, diversion, a safe place, a strong belief in positive criticism and the overall aim to encourage the use of BSL and the use of Deaf leaders in both Deaf and mainstream churches.

Jerry used his talents as a comedian and story teller to enhance his teaching and to build up the confidence of other tutors’. He also joined the one off story telling workshop held in Derby.

This photograph says it all - comedy, fun, Deaf led, enabling, positive feedback!



We asked Jerry to join us at our Summer School and workshops when he was able to. He grilled me - “What is Summer School? What is your definition of volunteer? How can I teach BSL through the Bible?” The last question led to an ongoing theological discussion about God, the Bible and the Church that



carried on right through until his last illness. However, once he was satisfied, he agreed to join us when nothing clashed with family events. Over time, when his participation became less, he remained interested in Signs of God and also the BSL Bible Translation Project.

Jerry will always be in our hearts - a gentleman, an Elder, a warrior, a committed family man and a Christian. 

**Editor’s Note:**

Jerry’s daughter Emma sent Janice a message “please thank everyone at Signs of God for welcoming our dad into their fold.” Emma, he’ll be sorely missed. 