

## Highlights from 2017 – 2018

### From the Chair: Transforming transitions

Following on the previous year's start of significant structural transitions within Signs of God, we are privileged to have been able to continue, with quality support and commitment of the Trustees and Core Team members, into a second year of transformation. Signs of God continues its sterling work in different ways, as described in the various activities below, with consistent teamwork and trust in our God.

We continue to search for skilled Deaf Tutors to be part of our fabulous Core Team. It is not time-consuming as people assume, because from experience, being part of an amazing skill set is an honour. Simply to be available and willing to be part of a Signs of God day workshop and other training events in various parts of the UK. Feedback from workshops shows much appreciation, empowerment and respect for British Sign Language in the Church and Deaf people within Christian settings. Deaf people in clergyhood and training towards it are forging ahead within the whole Church, showing the two-decade long legacy value of Signs of God's commitment within the Kingdom of God; most of all, sequential Summer Schools show evidence of this process. We look forward to the 2018 Summer School.

Once again, no matter how big or small you do, even a little daily prayer for us, we do genuinely thank you all, for maintaining our objects – BSL and increasing Deaf participation within the whole Church for effective leadership and genuine inclusion.  
God bless you all.

*Penelope Beschizza*  
Chair, Signs of God

### **Building capacity –core team**

The number of core team members rose to 38 people and this year saw the start of changes in administration. The Trustees continued with their plan to build capacity in the organisation by bringing more volunteers from the Core Team into active roles within the Charity. During the year, the Trustees actively sought volunteers to carry out specific tasks relating to the Charity's work. These included volunteers to support and advice on Safeguarding issues and volunteers to translate web content into British Sign Language. This is part of the Trustees' plan to build capacity in the organisation.

### **Signs of God**

Skilled Christian interpreters enable and support Deaf presenters and speakers to contribute to major Christian events, raising the level of Deaf awareness at the events and helping to promote a positive view of deafness. Below are some of ways we have been active during 2017/18:

- Approximately 120 members of the general public attended Signs of God Workshops. These included participants with no previous knowledge of the Deaf community or BSL.
- Professional training was given to approx. 30 professional interpreters to enable them to offer a better service at community events such as weddings, funerals and christenings

- During the year we responded to 127 requests for interpreters, amounting to 219 interpreting places.
- We provided 64 interpreters at 12 National Christian events so enabling Deaf people to attend and access the events of their choosing in order to participate in a faith activity.
- We had our first Deaf-led Signs of God event for Deaf people, held in Bristol, on the topic of Christian Worship in March 2017 and our next one is planned for September 2018.

Thanks go to all who were involved in these events; the organisers, teachers, trainers and interpreters and all who attended. Several travelled far to ensure quality delivery, which is much appreciated.

### **Workshops and Training events**

We ran day-workshops in Halifax and Nottingham and carried out training for professional interpreters in London and Nottingham. The planned 3 March workshop in Farnborough, due to be attended by 40+ participants, had to be cancelled due to the severe weather conditions.

Considering hosting a workshop? Contact Roma Parrick at [workshops@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:workshops@signsofgod.org.uk)

Interpreting Team Leaders' training took place in Leicester in March 2017 having 20 trained interpreters attend and develop their skills in leading interpreting teams. Some were able to apply the skills and knowledge learned as they volunteered to lead teams at Christian conferences representing Signs of God. A new initiative was set up to monitor interpreting teams ensuring Signs of God guidelines are followed along with providing support and encouragement.

### **Christian Interpreters in demand!**

The Christian Interpreters' Network continued to support the Deaf community by providing trained and experienced interpreters for a wide range of events. The initiative of telephone support to Team Leaders at Christian events was implemented for 2017.

There are over 230 people in the Christian Interpreters' Network. This is not an agency; it is a network comprising of trained interpreters and those with a high level of BSL (Level 6) who may be available to offer communication support for special religious events. Signs of God does not charge for this administrative service; the interpreter may offer the support on a voluntary basis or charge a fee. You can contact the network co-ordinator by email at [interpreting@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:interpreting@signsofgod.org.uk)

### **Finance**

Hannah Robinson is our Treasurer and has prepared the accounts. The full Annual Report and Accounts are freely available via the Signs of God website and the Charity Commission website following each AGM. Hannah can be contacted at [treasurer@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@signsofgod.org.uk)

Most of our income comes from individual donations and we continue to build on encouraging people to consider giving on a regular basis which enables us to plan for future training and events. Looking to the year ahead, having exceeded the earlier target of £500.00 we aim to raise a new target of £600.00 in regular monthly donations.

The launch of the Bursary Scheme has seen regular donations as well as one-off donations to support those that may otherwise not be in a financial position to attend training events such as Summer School. Applications to the Bursary were received and awarded by a panel. The panel consisted of three trustees; all applications were anonymized to avoid prejudice in the awards made by the panel. The support, process and success of this Bursary have been impressive.

### **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary service of thanksgiving**

A service of thanksgiving for the 20 years of Signs of God took place on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2017 in Bristol. This was followed by a celebration looking back at how Signs of God was birthed and the journey it has taken so far; recognising the many friends that played their part, no matter how small or big. Many shared how they are helped in their Christian journey, their church, Sign Language development, personal life and other factors on how they were called to this ministry. Deaf people also gave thanks for the chance to access training with quality and relevant BSL access. Special thanks were given for the work of one of the co-founders and ex-administrator, Rev Gillian Behenna.

When Gill and Rev Ros Hunt set up Signs of God in 1997, with the two main objectives, quality BSL in the Church and increasing participation of Deaf People in the Church, we did not envisage such growth and inclusion within two decades.

Thank you all.

