

Highlights from 2018 – 2019

From the Chair:

As my first year as Chair comes to an end I reflect on all God has done over the year. It has been a year to see many changes and it has been a privilege to work with the amazing volunteers; without you it would not be possible for Signs of God to be organisation/family that it is. Psalm 136:1 - "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever." As a family, within Signs of God, this should help us all to remember the love we have for one another.

My love to you all in His name.

Sarah Tupling
Chair, Signs of God

Building capacity –core team

The number of core team members rose to 39 people, with one person stepping down as a member so this means we remain at 38 core team members. The Trustees continue with their plan to build capacity in the organisation by bringing more volunteers from the Core Team into active roles within the Charity. Volunteers were sought and found to take over specific responsibilities from existing roles (Workshop coordinator and Merchandise coordinator). The workshop coordinator role has now become a two person role, sharing the responsibilities.

Volunteers assisted with the specific task of translating organisational procedures from written English into British Sign Language to ensure this is available for volunteers with BSL as their first language.

Signs of God Achievements

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 2018/19:

- Approximately 141 members of the general public attended Signs of God Workshops. These included participants with no previous knowledge of the Deaf community or BSL.
- 94 students attended a week-long Summer School. Students were at every level of Sign Language and many act as informal communicators or professional interpreters in their local churches to provide access to Deaf people.
- During the year we responded to 140 requests for interpreters, amounting to 259 interpreting places.
- We provided interpreters at 13 National Christian events, enabling Deaf people to attend and access the events of their choosing in order to participate in a faith activity.
- In September, a one day workshop specifically for Deaf/BSL users, "DeafSpace", was held in Leicester.
- Signs of God exhibited at Fresh Expressions and were invited to participate in discussion on making church more accessible. We offered information about the charity to the general public at variety of conferences with volunteers being on hand to answer enquiries.

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 Diss, Farnborough (Hampshire) and London. All events were well attended and the feedback from them was positive. One planned workshop was cancelled by the host organisation due to low numbers. Considering hosting a workshop? Contact Anna & Lucy at workshops@signsofgod.org.uk

The initiative to monitor interpreting teams was carried out at Spring Harvest, New Wine and Greenbelt and has seen a positive engagement between volunteers and Trustees who were able to provide support and encouragement.

Our Summer School in August 2018 attracted 94 students at all levels of BSL ability. We were very grateful to those who attended as tutors and lecturers. We had a range of presenters on a broad spectrum of topics related to Sign Language and Church, which were well received. This valuable training opportunity is available to all Christian denominations, as well as those of other faith groups or with no faith connections. Throughout the week, 17 of the students acted as Intern Interpreters, interpreting all lectures, and other activities, with the opportunity to get constructive feedback on their work from peers, as well as Deaf and interpreting tutors.

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 as implemented in 2017 has been well received and proved to be invaluable to those leading teams.

There are over 230 people in the Christian Interpreters' Network and Trustees aim to grow this number as demand is increasing. 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.

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.

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, the previously exceeded target of £500.00 has seen a small decrease in the later part of this financial year; we aim to raise our regular monthly donations to exceed the previous level of £525.00. We also receive occasional one-off 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 residential training events such as Summer School. The Bursary Scheme supported 11 attendees of Summer School 2018 who may otherwise, for financial reasons, been unable to attend the week.

Thank you all.

