

Highlights from 2019 – 2020

From the Chair:

Another year has gone by and it has been a very full year with many teams providing access at events and for those special occasions. We would not be able to do any of this if it were not for the grace of God through his provision both in financial terms and people like you who He has given a heart for the Deaf community and in sharing the gospel. May we continue to know and serve Him together.

"Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture." Psalm 100:3

Sarah Tupling
Chair, Signs of God

Building capacity –core team

At the 2019 AGM we saw the largest growth in recent years as four new core team members were nominated and subsequently added; the total number of core team members stands at 42 people. There was also one addition to the number of Trustees and the board of trustees now consists of 8 members. We continue with the 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. Two volunteers have been added in the specific shared role of Social Media officer.

Work continued on translating organisational procedures from written English into British Sign Language to ensure this is available for volunteers with BSL as their first language. Some website content has also been translated to make charity information and objects more easily accessible and open opportunity for people, in particularly members of the Christian Deaf community to engage with the work of the charity. This is currently in the editing phase.

Newsletters are produced seasonally and emailed to those subscribed giving details of events and articles to engage with those having shown an interest in the work of the charity.

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 2019/20:

- Approximately 151 members of the general public attended Signs of God Workshops. These included participants with no previous knowledge of the Deaf community or BSL.
- During the year we responded to 147 requests for interpreters, amounting to 286 interpreting places.
- We provided interpreters at National Christian events thereby enabling Deaf people to attend and access the events of their choosing in order to participate in a faith activity.

- Signs of God volunteers offered information about the charity to the general public at a variety of conferences and were on hand to answer enquiries.
- We helped to make online conferences accessible and provided interpretation for 18 Spring Harvest teaching videos.

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

Workshops and Training events

Day-workshops were held in Welwyn Garden City, Worcester and Eastbourne. All these events were well attended and the feedback from them was positive. Considering hosting a workshop? Contact Anna & Lucy at workshops@signsofgod.org.uk

In September a one day workshop specifically for Deaf BSL users “DeafSpace” was held in Staffordshire. This offered attendees to explore worship and scripture in their first language thus able to fully participate. This valuable training opportunity is available to all Christian denominations, as well as those of other faith groups or with no faith connections.

In February qualified interpreters from the Christian Interpreters’ Network were invited to attend an Interpreting Team Leaders’ training day approximately 15 people attended to learn skills needed for effective leadership.

Deaf BSL teachers were invited to a training day, eight people attended the day where they were participated in exploring teaching styles specific to scriptural and worship contexts and were introduced to Signs of God, the objects and discuss how they could be involved.

Two workshops scheduled for March 2020 have had to be postponed. This was due to the outbreak of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) and following Government guidelines on social distancing.

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. On 30 November volunteers from the Network were invited to an Away Day providing an opportunity to reflect and share experiences and receive spiritual nourishments.

With the outbreak of Coronavirus many of the national events and conferences were unable to take place in person and Signs of God volunteers have been working with organisers to produce online access. This is an ongoing demand as many Summer Conferences were due to take place.

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. Our monthly income from individual donations currently averages at £500 per month. A small decrease from the previous financial year. We also receive occasional one-off donations.

The Bursary Scheme is receiving regular donations as well as one-off donations. The Bursary Scheme opened up for applications for Summer School 2020. The scheme benefits members of the public who may otherwise not be able to attend the residential training event due to financial hardship. A total of £2,775 has been awarded to benefit seven participants with a further round of applications opening up later in the year.

Signs of God has a range of branded goods for sale that result in a small amount of funds. The purpose of such merchandise is mainly to publicise the Charity.

Charity expenditure has supported the events and achievements as outlined above, all of which fall under the Charity's two objects. Consideration is given to each training activity to try to ensure that participants' fees cover all the costs of the event and it makes a small surplus. Surplus funds enable Signs of God to develop new work or continue to run important events such as our Summer School, which is, generally, run at a considerable cost to the charity.

Thank you all so very much.

