



## Highlights from 2020 – 2021

### **From the Chair:**

*Another year has passed, and it does seem to have come around rather quickly. Signs of God continue to be entirely managed by volunteers and I would like to take this opportunity to recognise their time, work and commitment in supporting the Charity in their many different ways. Much work is done in the background especially policy writing and the organising of training events which would otherwise just not be possible. I feel privileged in my position as Chair and look forward to continuing to work together with such amazing people to the goals of the charity.*

*Sarah Tupling  
Chair, Signs of God*

### **Building capacity – Core team**

*The 2021 Annual General Meeting was held during Summer School giving core team members as well as visiting students opportunity to hear more about the work of Signs of God. Two new people were voted in as Core Team Members, Naomi Barry and Sara Head. Mary Whittaker was nominated and elected to join the Board of Trustees. Sarah Haynes and Penny Beschizza both resigned as members of the Board of Trustees, they were recognised and thanked for their years of excellent service and commitment to the organisation. The current number of core team members stands at 46 people, 7 of whom serve as Trustees and the board of trustees. During the year, the Trustees actively sought volunteers to carry out specific tasks relating to the Charity's work and successfully secured support with the first phase of the website content review as well as the extensive work carried out relating to Safeguarding policies.*

### **Signs of God – what have we been doing?**

- *Approximately 76 members of the general public attended Signs of God workshop events.*
- *During the year we received a record number of requests for interpreters (approx. 160 requests) amounting to over 221 interpreting places.*
- *Following on from the success of the previous reporting year we received and responded to request by various Christian organisations to provide access for BSL users for online live and pre-recorded conferences/events.*
- *Summer School 2021 residential training week took place in the summer and saw 73 students of all abilities both Deaf and hearing explore the use and application of British Sign Language in Christian settings. The teaching team consisted of 19 people expertly delivering lectures/teaching/support on a variety of themes and topics relating to sign language, church, faith and deaf community.*
- *There are more than 240 people in the Christian Interpreters' Network. These comprise interpreters both qualified and trainee, Deaf Translators, and those with a high level of BSL (Level 6) who can offer communication support.*

- *The Trustees and Secretary to the Trustees attended a bespoke online training session on Charity Governance delivered by an external trainer.*
- *Volunteers produce seasonal Newsletters as well as occasional Brief News updates and prayer requests which are emailed to those subscribed to the mailing list. These give details of events and articles to engage with those having shown an interest in the work of the charity.*

### **Workshops and Training events**

*Signs of God held four workshops both in person and online where approximately 76 members of the public attended. These included participants with no previous knowledge of the Deaf community or BSL. Including this group of people ensures a greater awareness of Deaf people in the general population as well as the accessibility issues faced accessing religious services.*

*Day-workshops have returned to being held in person with one having taken place in Wakefield and a further three workshops were held virtually. By offering the online workshops more members of the public can access the teaching especially those who may have difficulties in traveling to venues. Workshop coordinators can be contacted by emailing [workshops@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:workshops@signsofgod.org.uk)*

*Summer School 2021 residential was the first in person event held since the COVID-19 pandemic, and the collaboration between venue staff and Signs of God ensured a safe return to this bi-annual training. Feedback from students (73) and tutors was very positive and we look forward building on this for future events. The intern programme was again successfully run during Summer School, giving trained interpreters opportunities to work together providing access for all attendees of the conference, with constructive and structured feedback on their work given to enable them to continue developing.*

*Training is available to all Christian denominations, as well as other faith groups or with no faith connections. It also offers valuable opportunities as an Intern Interpreter by way of co-working, constructive and structured feedback on their work from both tutors and peers.*

### **Christian Interpreters - Demand is high**

*Skilled Christian interpreters were sourced using the Christian Interpreter's Network enabling access for Deaf people attending significant life events, vocational training, ministry placements, pastoral, church community and prayer meetings. This facilitated their ability to attend and access a wide variety of faith building activities and events of their choosing both in person and using online platforms.*

*There are more than 240 people in the Christian Interpreters' Network. Trustees aim to grow this number as demand is increasing. CIN is not an agency; it is a network comprising of Deaf Translators, trained interpreters, and those with a high level of BSL (Level 6) who may be available to offer communication support for special religious and life events.*

*Signs of God does not charge for this administrative service; the interpreter may offer the support on a voluntary/reduced basis or charge a fee. You can contact the network co-ordinator by emailing [interpreting@signsofgod.org.uk](mailto:interpreting@signsofgod.org.uk).*

## **Finance**

Hannah Robinson our Treasurer prepared the accounts which were approved and signed off by the independent examiner. 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. Our monthly income from individual donations currently averages just under £500 per month including a regular donation to the Bursary Fund. We also receive occasional one-off donations.

The Bursary Fund scheme benefits members of the public who may otherwise not be able to attend a training event due to financial hardship. Seventeen students who attended Summer School 2021 had been awarded partial funds towards the cost of the training, enabling them to participate.

The offering taking during Summer School amounted to £1,526.00 and has been split to benefit the Bursary Scheme, the Richard Magill Fund and BSL Bible Translation Project.

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 work of 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 such as the new national online workshops, which are likely to run at a deficit.

Signs of God do not have employed staff. All its activities are carried out by volunteers (both members and non-members).

Thank you to all who served during this time; the organisers, teachers, translators, trainers, interpreters and all those who attended. Some whom travelled far and worked long hours to provide British Sign Language at events/conferences, we recognise and very much appreciate their commitment.

Thank you for your support, prayers and giving in the different ways.

Sarah Tupling



... we always pray that God will show you everything  
he wants you to do and that you may have all the  
wisdom and understanding his Spirit gives.  
Colossians 1:9 CEV