

Highlights from 2022 – 2023

From the Chair:

Below you will read of all that has been happening between March 2022 – March 2023 and there is much to be thankful for. Personally, I continued to be amazed by all that we were called to do and one event which stood out for me was the privilege of being involved in teaching primary school children in Wales. It almost seems unthinkable that only a year earlier we were only just getting back to meeting in person again. We do remember those who continue to be affected by the pandemic be it physically, financially, or emotionally.

There have been many changes and the same is to be said for our organisation including the lovely addition of core team members, Lyn, Mark and Beatrice as well as having the joy of Shaunett joining our Board of Trustees. Do read below about what we, you and me have been doing this reporting year and give thanks.

"Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name." 1 Chronicles 29:13 (NKJV)

*Sarah Tupling
Chair, Signs of God*

Volunteers

Signs of God do not have employed staff; all of its activities are carried out by volunteers (both members and non-members) and we are truly grateful for the time and skills people offer in support.

Volunteers have supported the work of the charity in many ways such as reviewing policies, developing the website and data processing, being part of teaching teams, responding to enquiries, dealing with merchandise, social media presence, and administration. We email seasonal newsletters, occasional Brief News updates and prayer requests to those subscribed to the mailing list, giving details of events and articles to engage those having shown an interest in the work of the charity.

We look for volunteers for specific tasks as the need arises. This is part of the Trustees' plan to build capacity in the organisation as well as enable volunteers to hand over tasks if they need to step down. Trustees aim for specific roles and tasks to be held for a period of 2 years minimum.

Several Trustees and the administrator attended online discussions with an advisor on GDPR, website security and data management, the outcome of which and next step options have been considered and plans for changes will happen during the next reporting year.

The 2022 Annual General Meeting was for the first time held with Trustees and Core Team members attending in person and via Zoom. We refer to this as a hybrid meeting.

The following people were nominated and voted in as Core Team members: Beatrice Osborn, Mark Peel and Lyn Kirwan; Shaunett Harris was voted onto the board of Trustees and Gill Behenna, Trudy Field and Hannah Robinson were re-elected onto the Board of Trustees. One Core team member stood down.

*The current number of core team members is 48.
8 of the Core Team are also trustees.*

Signs of God – what have we been doing?

- *Approximately 61 members of the general public attended in person Signs of God workshop events, plus 1 online workshop was delivered to 19 people.*
- *In addition to the above workshops, we received a special request by a primary school in Cardiff and volunteers presented 5 specialist workshop sessions. Between 130-150 children and their teachers attended them.*
- *Sourcing interpreters for various Christian events and services is one of the main ways in which Signs of God seeks to benefit members of the general public. Individuals as well as organisations request interpreters, aiming to include those who use British Sign Language. During the year we received another record number of requests for interpreters (approx. 204 requests) amounting to over 180 interpreting places.*
- *Following on from the success of the previous reporting year we received and responded to requests by various Christian organisations to provide access for BSL users for online live and pre-recorded conferences/events as well as translations by Deaf Sign Language Translators of various resources.*
- *There are more than 230 people in the Christian Interpreters' Network, comprising of interpreters both qualified and trainee, Deaf Translators, and those with a high level of BSL (minimum Level 6). When available, they will respond to requests for significant life events, vocational training, ministry placements, pastoral, church community, conferences, special services, prayer meetings, etc.*
- *Volunteers produce seasonal newsletters as well as occasional brief news updates and prayer requests which we email 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.*
- *Following the AGM, and as part of the 25th Anniversary, the Silver Jubilee Project was launched starting with an afternoon session where members identified, discussed and shared ideas on areas where the charity could further benefit members of the Christian Deaf community.*

Workshops and Training events

On 26 March 2022 – 19 people attended a Tutor training day held in Coventry; attended by both Core team members and non-members with an interest in becoming involved in the work of the charity.

Signs of God held three general workshops, two were held in person and one was offered as an online workshop. Approximately 80 members of the public attended these three workshops, including participants with no previous knowledge of the Deaf community or sign language. Including this group of people ensures a greater awareness of Deaf people in the general population as well as the accessibility difficulties faced in accessing religious services.

You can contact the Workshop Coordinators by emailing workshops@signsofgod.org.uk

Christian Interpreters - Demand is high

We were able to book skilled Christian interpreters using the Christian Interpreter's Network to give access for Deaf people attending significant life events, vocational training, ministry placements, pastoral, church community and prayer meetings. This widened their ability to attend a wide variety of faith-building activities and events of their choosing, both in person and using online platforms.

There are more than 230 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 of Deaf Translators, trained interpreters, and those with a high level of BSL (minimum 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-fee basis or charge a fee. You can contact the network co-ordinator by emailing interpreting@signsofgod.org.uk and can sign up to join the CIN network via our website.

Finance

Hannah Robinson our Treasurer prepared the accounts which were approved and signed off by the independent examiner. The full Annual Report and Accounts will be 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 encourage 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 and during this financial year a substantial gift of £1,000 was received through Payroll Giving; the donor is unknown.

The Bursary Fund scheme benefits members of the public who may otherwise not be able to attend a residential training event due to financial hardship. During the reporting year funds have been awarded to six applicants therefore making their attendance at Summer School 2023 possible.

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

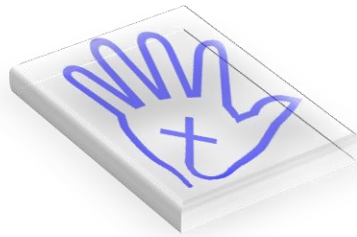
Charity expenditure supported the events and achievements as outlined above, all of which fall under the Charity's two objects. Consideration is given to each training activity to try to ensure that participants' fees cover all the costs of the event and it makes a small surplus. Surplus funds enable Signs of God to develop new work such as the online workshops, which are likely to run at a deficit.

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

Thank you once again for your support during this time we value your prayers and giving in the many different ways.

Sarah Tupling

Chair of Trustees



*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."
Hebrews 12:28 NASB*