

Highlights from 2024 – 2025

From the Chair:

Looking back on a year filled with activity and lots of planning and organising with joy and thanks. We had a few “firsts” in some of our workshops which you can read about below and in our Autumn newsletter. Much to be thankful for; Glory to God for without him none of this would be possible. In my reflections I remember those who make all this possible and lift them in prayer with thanksgiving.

We continue in our work for the Lord, excited about what God has planned as we move forward. May you be encouraged, as am I, in reading and rejoicing because all that has been achieved this past year.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.” Philippians 4:4-5

*Sarah Tupling
Chair, Signs of God*

Volunteers

Signs of God is so grateful to be able to continue to operate because of the support of its volunteers. The charity does not have any employed staff; all activities and governance are carried out by volunteers (both Core team members and non-members). Volunteers are sought for specific roles and tasks as the need arises; roles are usually held for a minimum period of 2 years although some for longer. We look to build capacity in the organisation as well as enable volunteers to hand over tasks should they need to step back.

Over the reporting year volunteers have supported the work of the charity in a variety of ways such as planning events, reviewing policies, website maintenance and data processing, advisory roles, contributing to and editing the Autumn newsletter, being part of teams for workshops, respond to enquiries, deal with merchandise purchases, social media presence, and administration.

Governance

The Trustees and Secretary to the Trustees (Administrator) held regular meetings either in-person or online to discuss governance and planned charitable activities.

The migration to a new database (iKnowCharity) was implemented and is now used for mailshots for general and Core Team emails, and Christian Interpreters’ Network requests. People are able to update their data preferences via a link within the email.

Signs of God is an Associate Member of Churches for All and represented by a member of the Core Team at their meetings.

Signs of God is a member of and represented by a Trustee at BSL Alliance meetings.

The 2024 Annual General Meeting took place on Saturday 8th June 2024 in Oxford this was a Hybrid meeting which enabled 6 Core members, who otherwise would not have been able, to attend.

Wendy Everingham was nominated and duly elected to become a Core Team member. Wendy has been a long-time supporter and often been part of, and led, interpreting teams at Spring Harvest. Wendy has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the deaf community as well as administrative skills and much more. Wendy joined the AGM remotely and was welcomed to the core team.

Nicki Sanders had informed Trustees that for personal reasons she would stand down from the Core team.

The current number of core team members is 47 (8 of the Core Team are also trustees).

Overview of what we have been doing

- *Approximately 130 members of the public attended in-person five Signs of God workshop.*
- *The Christian Interpreters' Network (CIN) received and responded to approximately 170 requests amounting to over 280 interpreting places.*
- *Volunteers wrote and emailed occasional Brief News updates, prayer requests, and greeting cards 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.*
- *A strategy day was held looking at recruiting/training tutors for workshops; merchandise, GDPR as well as safeguarding. Breakout groups reviewed various aspects of the charity.*
- *Funds were rewarded to 3 applicants of the Bursary Scheme and this will make it possible for them to attend Summer School 2025. A second round of applications was opened.*
- *Monitoring of interpreting teams at Christian conferences took place this is to offer support, observe, and gather feedback from Deaf delegates and event organisers.*
- *The migration to a new database (iKnowCharity) was implemented*

Workshops

Signs of God held five in-person workshops. Approximately 130 members of the public attended the workshops which took place in York, Derby, Chalfont St Peter, Chippenham and Newcastle upon Tyne. This was the first time we were able to run a workshop that far north of the country.

The Chippenham workshop was the first time a Deafblind tutor was on team. Some participants were very new, having never learnt sign language and/or new to the Deaf community, others were of various ability both Deaf and hearing.

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

Summer School

Summer School residential training will take place at Hayes Conference Centre 15th -20th August 2025. A sub-committee consisting of Trustees have been tasked with the organisation, sourcing of tutors and lecturers for the event. An advertisement was circulated via email and social media to reach out to both Deaf and hearing people wishing to improve understanding and application of British Sign Language in Christian settings. Bookings opened on 1 September 2024 offering an early bird discount, we saw a good uptake.

Our training is available to all Christian denominations, as well as other faith groups or those with no faith connections. It also offers valuable opportunities of co-working; receive constructive and structured feedback on their work from both tutors and peers.

You can contact the Summer School Coordinator by emailing summerschool@signsofgod.org.uk

Christian Interpreters' Network (CIN)

CIN consists of approximately 240 people. It is a network (not an agency) of Deaf Translators, trained interpreters both qualified and trainees, and those with a high level of BSL (minimum Level 6) who can offer communication support. When available, they will respond to requests and liaise directly with the requester.

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 public. Anyone can contact us to help source support in making an occasion or event inclusive for those who use British Sign Language. During the year we dealt with approximately 170 enquiries, amounting to over 280 interpreting places.

Opportunities to be part of a team offers a chance for peer feedback and is a great introduction for less experienced persons. This can support their training, give them confidence and skills to offer communication support in other settings.

We helped source skilled interpreters 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 range of faith-building activities and events of their choosing, both in person and using online platforms.

Signs of God does not charge for this administrative service and do not get involved in the financial arrangements. The interpreter may offer the support on a voluntary/reduced-fee basis, charge a fee and/or have travel reimbursed. Some organisations offer a fixed honorarium and accommodation.

Those who were part of a Signs of God interpreting team were offered the opportunity to give anonymous feedback, via an online survey. This is used to improve our practice in supporting those who offer their time and experience in this way. In turn this will help improve accessibility and inclusivity for future Deaf attendees of these types of events/conferences.

You can contact the network co-ordinator by emailing 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 will be available via the Signs of God website and the Charity Commission website following each AGM.

Signs of God gains funds from donations – individual donations currently stand at just below £455 per month including a regular donation to the Bursary Fund; funds are also received from occasional one-off donations.

The Bursary Scheme - applications to the fund opened and during the first round received three applications. These applications were anonymised and a panel of three Trustees considered each one. The panel awarded partial funds towards the cost of the training (total of £1,135 was awarded) enabling them to secure a place at Summer School 2025.

Surplus from activities – Sometimes events result in a small surplus for the charity, the funds enable Signs of God to develop new work and training.

Fundraising – we have a small 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 with a small surplus. Surplus funds enable Signs of God to develop new work and training.

You can contact the Treasurer by emailing treasurer@signsofgod.org.uk

Thank you to all who served during this time - organisers, welcomers, teachers, prayer partners, translators, trainers, advisors, interpreters and all those who attended our events.

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



Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Colossians 3:15