

Signs of God information sheet.

Conducting a baptism service at which a BSL/English Interpreter is present.

Information for the interpreter:

The Interpreter will need as much information as possible to enable him/her to prepare for the service. Ideally this information should be sent to the interpreter before the baptism.

A FULL TEXT of the service including hymns and readings – please don't assume the interpreter will have a copy of your church's prayer or hymn book, or a Bible

Text or notes of the Minister's sermon

A note of all the names of those to be baptised.
If possible, a copy of any testimonies that will be given

The Sign Language Interpreter will be a professional who will seek to work with you in every way. He/she may not be a practising Christian. You may wish to invite him/her to join you for prayer before the service, but you should not make the assumption that he/she will accept.

Practical considerations:

A Service of infant baptism may involve a procession to the font for the actual Baptism. You need to agree with the Interpreter where he/she should stand where the parents and godparents can see him/her and not in the way of the Minister taking the baby.

If a Baptism pool is used, the interpreter needs to stand where they can be seen. This needs special thought if the person being baptised is Deaf. Sometimes it may be better to use two interpreters; one for the Deaf person and one for the congregation.

The Minister may invite the parents/godparents to stand or to come to the front for the vows they have to make. If space allows, they should stand to one side and at an angle so they can still see the interpreter and the congregation can see their responses if they are signed.

In a liturgical service, signed responses may take slightly longer than spoken responses. Be aware of this before moving on in the service.

Liturgical considerations

The concept of "repeat after me" for the vows may not be a familiar one for many Deaf people. For an Anglican service of infant baptism, the parents and godparents may make their vows in spoken English or BSL with appropriate interpreter support.

Whilst the English response for example to "Do you turn to Christ?" is "I turn to Christ" an acceptable BSL response would be an emphatic "yes!" or "Amen!" This would be voiced appropriately by the interpreter.

The use of visual symbols is helpful for Deaf people so consider candles, anointing with oil and/or signing with the sign of the cross

If you are unsure of the suitability of any liturgical material, *contact Signs of God* for advice.