

SIGNS MAGAZINE
CHRISTMAS EDITION 2025

The Visit of the Wise Men

Matthew 2:1-2, 7-12 RSV

(v. 1) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him."

(v. 7) Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.



Deaf
Anglicans
Together

Registered Charity no. 1117313

From the Chair, Rev'd Hannah Lewis

I remember the very first residential Spring Conference with the National Deaf Church Conference (NDCC is DAT's old name) in 2001. Before then they had day conferences and people would book B&Bs to stay the night so they could meet and chat. The conference was in Ely, and I was one of the presenters. It followed the now familiar format of a mix of presentations, workshops and worship and it was in one of the workshops that a group of people created first attempts at BSL hymns – without music and with only a few English words to help us remember what to sign.

One of the reasons I've been remembering this is because I was also trying to remember the first time I met the late Rev Vera Hunt. I think I'd met her before, but this was probably the first time I had the chance for a conversation with her. As a young priest I was in awe of the first Deaf woman to be ordained priest, but she was kind and generous always. And it was amazing to watch her celebrate communion in BSL – my first time seeing a Deaf person preside at Holy Communion. We owe so much to her as a pioneer and role model. Vera's obituary is on page 5.

It is great that DAT have continued to arrange Spring conferences every year (with Covid interruption) since then. They are always wonderful weekends where we all enjoy seeing old friends, meeting new and going home with our souls and our faith refreshed through the teaching and worship. I am really looking forward to seeing what Sue Whalley has to share with us about prayer and praying - in the Spirit, at all times, for everything. I look forward to seeing those of you who will come in May.

We, in DAT committee are also looking for some help. We need someone who can help with finances especially. They don't need to join the committee unless they want to. If you know anyone who might be interested, please ask them to contact me by e-mail on chair@deafanglicanstogether.org.uk

Anyway I will wish you all a joy filled and peace filled Christmas from me and from all the DAT committee.

Hannah

Dates for your Diary

DAT Spring Conference 15th-17th May 2026.

See back of Signs

Go! Sign BSL Fellowship Camping Weekend

19th- 21st June 2026

Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire

Contact: admin@gosign.org

IEWG Conference, Oslo, Norway

28th September – 2nd October 2026

For more details see

<https://deaf-iewg.com/conference>

Go! Sign Bible Conference Weekend

16th- 18th October 2026

Cliff College, Hope Valley, Derbyshire

Contact: admin@gosign.org

London Deaf Church BSL Carol Service

Date Friday 12th December 2025

Time 6.30pm

Venue Church of the Annunciation, Marble Arch

Festive music and traditional carols in British Sign Language. A special night to celebrate Christmas with the Deaf Community. Everyone is welcome! For more details go to

www.annunciationmarblearch.org.uk/worship

Cambs Deaf Church Christmas Celebration

on Sunday 14th December at 2.30pm, at All Saints Church, Market Square, Huntingdon, PE29 3NR. This will be organised by Canon Jan Smith.

Wise Men and Gifts.

When we think about the wise men, we always think of the three gifts they gave to Jesus, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Were these the first Christmas gifts? No! the first Christmas gift was Jesus Himself, 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son,' John 3:16 ERV. God the Father gave the first gift His only Son, Jesus. The wise men's gifts were the second Christmas gifts in return. The same for us this Christmas we will both receive gift and give. For example I will give my sons presents I sure they will be giving me a present.

Three gifts the wise men gave help us to remember who Jesus is, first gold, the king's crown is normally made of gold the most expensive metal at that time. Remember the wise men's question 'Where is the baby who has been born as the king of the Jews?' Matthew 2:2 EASY But Jesus is more than the King of one nation He is the top King, ruler of all. We must remember that kings in the past made the laws and were the final judge. Will you obey Jesus as your king?

The next gift frankincense this was used in the Jewish temple to worship God. Yes, Jesus is God. 'Before the world began, the Word was there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became a man and lived among us.' John 1:1,14 ERV. Will you worship Jesus this Christmas as God or are other things be more important to you?

Lastly myrrh, most of us will remember that myrrh was used when Jesus was buried, we link it with Jesus's death. 'Nicodemus went with Joseph...He brought about 100 pounds of spices—a mixture of myrrh and aloes.' John 19:39 ERV. This was not the only use of myrrh. In the great love song, Song of Solomon, myrrh is mentioned 7 times. The greatest love is linked to Jesus's death, 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son,' John 3:16 ERV. He Jesus was given to die in place of us, that we can again have fellowship with God the Father. Will you this Christmas remember that Jesus came to die for us to forgive our sin so that we can again have fellowship with God the Father?

This Christmas let us put Jesus first as our King, God and Saviour, and other things second.

Ernest Seager

Rev'd Vera Hunt MBE (1933-2025)

We were all very sad to hear the news that Rev'd Vera Hunt, the Hon. President of Deaf Anglicans Together, passed away on 9th September 2025, peacefully at home with her daughter Carol and her family.



Vera was Chair and a long-standing committee member of the National Deaf Churches Conference (NDCC), which was founded in 1967. The NDCC was renamed Deaf Anglicans Together (DAT) in 2005, and Vera became honorary president for life when she stepped down as Chair after 15 years.

Vera was born in East London in 1933. She became deaf, having had meningitis twice, at 5 and 7 years old. In 1954 she married Leon Hunt (D) and they had hearing twins, Clive and Carol.

In the early 1980's Vera was the secretary of Uxbridge Deaf Club and helped to set up a Deaf Church there with Rev'd Howard White, Assistant Chaplain of the Royal Association for Deaf People at St Saviour's Acton. She trained for the ministry at Salisbury and Wells Theological College and was ordained deacon in 1991. The same year she became Hon. Chaplain for RAD at St Saviour's. She became the first Deaf woman to be ordained priest in April 1994 and officiated for many years at St Saviour's until its closure in 2014.

Vera and Leon ran Hayes Deaf Club together for many years. Leon cooked lunch for 20-30 people at Hayes Deaf Church every month, shortly before he died in 2018 at the age of 89. While Chair of NDCC in the 1990's, Vera and Leon organized several NDCC pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Jordan, the Seven Churches of Asia, and a trip to Oberammergau in 2000.

Vera was one of the first DAT representatives to attend General Synod from 2005 to 2010, having campaigned for the right for Deaf people to speak at Synod with the help of BSL interpreters. She was awarded an MBE by HRH The Prince of Wales in 2006.

In retirement Vera became an Honorary Chaplain for the Oxford Diocesan Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODCD). In 2023 at the age of 90, she attended the 125th anniversary of the ODCD, at a special church service led by Rev'd Hannah Lewis, Chaplain among Deaf People for the Oxford Diocese.



Vera celebrating 25 years as Priest in April 2019

A memorial service was held for Vera on Saturday 8th November at Slough Deaf Centre by Rev'd Hannah Lewis. This was well attended by many people from the Deaf Community, who gathered to remember her dedicated and outstanding contribution to the NDCC and Deaf Anglicans Together.

Rest in peace, Vera.

*Mary Bucknall
with thanks to Rev'd Hannah Lewis*



NDCC Committee (early 2000's)
L to R: Hilary Sage, Janice Palmer,
Vera, Sue and Ken Dyson, and Leon

VERA HUNT – extracts from the funeral eulogy
by Rev'd Roger Williams, Retired Chaplain with Deaf People
in the Diocese of Oxford on Friday 3rd October 2025

"When I think of Vera, I think of love."

As chaplain with Vera, I thank God for her love, support, friendship and encouragement. I know many chaplains and lay ministers will feel the same.

We thank God for her loving hard work with the Deaf Choir Festival, National Deaf Church Conference (now Deaf Anglicans Together), Crown Centre Hayes, London Deaf Church, Slough Deaf Church – church first then bingo afterwards!

Vera also had an amazing ministry with Deaf people in prison, travelling great distances to visit a Deaf person in prison. She also taught hearing prisoners to sign so that they could communicate with Deaf people in prison.

We especially thank God for that very special loving partnership of Vera and Leon. We thank God for all that they did for family, friends, the Deaf Church and Deaf Community.



Vera leading the London Deaf Choir at the NDCC Deaf Choir Festival, Milton Keynes

Memories of Vera

by Ken Dyson (Lay Reader with the Oxford Deaf Church)

I first met Vera about 40 years ago, probably at Oxford Deaf church. I thank her for leading, or rather dragging, me into the Deaf Church. I recall her taking over as chair of NDCC at the Leicester meeting in 1990 when George Riches, who was chair at the time, could not come due to health issues. Vera remained chair until 2005, by which time NDCC had become Deaf Anglicans Together (DAT).

Vera did love hymns. If I suggested a hymn for the next service, Vera would often sign much of the hymn and we had to wait till she finished. I often saw Vera with two briefcases so that she would not get the services, at different churches on the same day, mixed up. Her husband Leon was her faithful chauffeur while Vera made notes in the car.

She arranged many trips abroad. One was a coach trip and tour to Oberammergau in 2000. In France, six of us crowded into a lift which then got stuck on the way down. Luckily, a hearing Frenchman was with us was able to speak through the emergency microphone and we were soon freed. The manager said we were too many and told us off, whereupon Vera carefully counted all seven of us and then pointed to the notice saying maximum ten persons (or dix personnes) and told the manager off. Vera could be forceful.

She arranged a drama festival at Oxford. There was a mix up with Vera as to who should order the ice creams at the interval as it was a sweltering day. Myself and Rev Roger [Williams] had to walk through Oxford to order 100 ice cream tubs which melted on the way back. She often played Bingo at Slough and held services in the middle of the hall while people walked around. Bingo and God. I thank Vera for many evenings at her home with tea and cakes.

Anna Knaggs, a Lay Reader in the Oxford Diocese, signed the following hymn at the memorial service, written by Vera herself.

Father above, Son below
Spirit of love, let your presence flow
Into our hearts, that we may go
And share your love with others

Father above, Son below
Spirit of joy, let your presence flow
Into our hearts, that we may go
And share your joy with others

Father above, Son below
Spirit of peace, let your presence flow
Into our hearts, that we may go
And share your peace with others.

Praise to the Father; praise to the Son
Praise to the Spirit; the Three in One.
Love, Joy and Peace; may God's presence flow
Into our hearts - and lead us home.

Rev'd Vera Hunt



Vera in St Mary's Chapel Jerusalem
on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Canon Gill Behenna writes:

When I think of Vera, it feels as though she has always been there, throughout my ministry, but I think we both met properly around 1988 when Vera started training for ordination.

Vera studied at Salisbury and Wells Theological College at residential weekends and I interpreted them for the 3 years of her training. It was such an honour and privilege. It was also great fun as you can imagine. Vera was always so determined to educate people to become more aware of Deaf people. I remember sitting in the bar with everyone trying to learn The Lord's Prayer in BSL!

Vera was the first Deaf person to train in the Church of England, using interpreters. It was hard work ensuring that the college understood what we needed so Vera could access her training. Thank goodness that Vera was such a good student and did lots of reading herself because the amount of information was often far too much to take in over a weekend.

I was privileged to interpret for Vera when she was ordained deacon in St Paul's Cathedral in 1991 and again when she was ordained priest in 1994. It was wonderful that I could interpret for Vera's ordination and that she could then lay hands on me when I was ordained priest in Exeter Cathedral. I felt very blessed to have my special friend there.

I was also privileged to travel as interpreter on several pilgrimages that Vera led to The Holy Land, Jordan, Turkey, and Oberammergau. These were wonderful holidays, organised superbly by Vera and I will always be so grateful for the chance to see such marvellous places. After one trip, the Deaf people on the trip gave me a necklace of tiny white and blue beads which I believe Vera chose. It's still one of my favourite necklaces and I wear it often.

A Cathedral Sermon in BSL by Rev'd Neil Robinson

On Sunday 25th May 2025, Rev'd Neil Robinson, Chaplain to the Deaf Community in the Diocese of Salisbury, preached a sermon in BSL during the Sung Eucharist Service in Salisbury Cathedral, with a voice-over.

His theme was taken from John 14:23-29 and Acts 16:9-15. He told the story of Lydia, who was Paul's first convert in Philippi, and linked this to the history of deaf missionaries. This is an edited extract from his sermon.



“Let us look at the lesson from Acts Chapter 16. During Paul's stay in Macedonia, he met Lydia, the local purple linen merchant, and she became the first convert in Macedonia to follow Jesus. It reminds me of the missionaries who went to different places in the world, including the places within the U.K.

There are some deaf missionaries working in other countries. There was a good example of Ian Stillman's ministry in India where he worked for 27 years. He was profoundly deaf and married to a local hearing lady. He founded with his wife what is called Nambikkai Foundation which provided support and empowerment to deaf people there. Ian was faithful in serving God until he was imprisoned for something he didn't commit. I recall joining the deaf Christians to pray for his release from the prison for 2 years before he was officially released. He obeyed God to go to India. What I have learnt from Ian's work is that there are elements of risk involved in obeying God to go and share God's love with complete strangers.

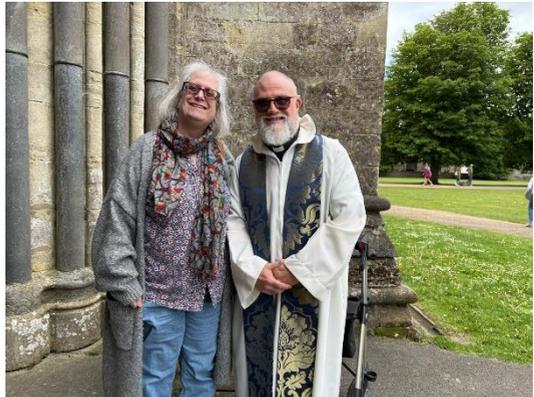
The point is that we are called by God to become courageous in facing new challenges. Our society has become too corrupt. We hear some news that some faithful Christians in the U.K. were being arrested and charged for just preaching the Good News. But I would like to share a verse to encourage us: ***'I hereby command you: 'Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.'*** (Joshua 1:9)

This verse challenged us to go and claim our local communities for Christ. Please let me explain to you about something else and I think that you would be interested to learn something from this. ***'But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.'*** (John 14:26)

This empowering Spirit will help us to grow stronger in God's Word. He is on a 24/7 watch over us and he will not leave us at all. That is the good news for us!

We need to pray for God to raise up new deaf pastors or priests to serve their local deaf community across the U.K. as there are chronic shortages. I believe that God has called them to do that but there would be challenges and barriers for them to break through.

Let us remember to pray for the new deacons and priests this year that God will equip them for this work to bless their parishes. Please pray for the bishops in this diocese as they carry out their work. Amen."



“Signs of Hope: The Claggett Statement and Deaf Theology Today”

By Rev'd Dr Hannah Lewis

On 28th & 29th March 2025 I attended a conference at the College of the Holy Cross, near Boston, USA. This conference had two aims. One was to remember and celebrate the “Claggett Statement” which was developed 40 years ago. This statement was produced (in English and ASL) by a group of Deaf and hearing Christians from all denominations in the USA and explored what Liberation Theology meant to Deaf people. The second aim was how Deaf liberation theology might develop in the future.

This statement of faith talked about faith in Jesus and then went on to say, *“We do not view deafness as a sickness or handicap. We view it as a gift from God, which has led to the creation of a unique language and culture, worthy of respect and affirmation. We believe that it is necessary to stop trying to communicate the Gospel through hearing people’s eyes, through their interpretation and understanding of the Bible, and through their methods. Deaf people have a right to know the Gospel in their own language, and relevant to their own context ... We believe the Holy Spirit is leading all of us to work for a new day of justice for all Deaf people.”*

This photo shows surviving members of the Claggett group who shared with us what it was like to be there, and how they felt about what had happened over the last 40 years and looked ahead to the future and what they hoped would happen next.



Because my book, *Deaf Liberation Theology*, covered the same area as the Claggett Statement, I was invited to present a session on what had happened in the past 40 years with Deaf Liberation theology. It was really interesting to research this. Hopefully I will be able to share this information again in the UK at some point.

For the other presentations, we heard about areas like Black Deaf theology, Gay Deaf theology, Critical Disability theology and how they bring new insights and ideas to Deaf Liberation Theology. The presentations were filmed and hopefully we will be able to share the films and a book sometime. The language of the conference was ASL, but I presented in BSL with ASL and spoken translation and they very kindly provided ASL-BSL/Auslan interpreters so I could follow the rest of it. There were also about 100 people watching on zoom.

The other thing I loved about the conference was meeting Deaf Clergy and lay Christians from all over the USA. On the Sunday I visited a Deaf and hearing Catholic Church, St Jude's near Boston which has two parish priests, one Deaf and one hearing. Both priests know ASL and all their services are bilingual in both ASL and English.

I stayed on for a few days holiday as I had never visited Boston before. I enjoyed the history. The photograph is with the chair of the (American) National Catholic Office for the Deaf, Minette Sternke, outside the Boston Tea Party museum. This is where the American Revolutionary war began and America became independent of England in 1773. I had a wonderful time at the conference and visiting Boston and came back very excited and full of ideas, some of which are dreams about what DAT might be able to do. Watch this space!



--- Newsflash ---

Congratulations to Rev'd Esther Rose, who has been appointed half-time chaplain with the Deaf Community in the Diocese of Bristol. Esther will be licensed at a special service in spring 2026.

Also congratulations to Rev'd Susan Myatt, Baptist Minister and Deaf Chaplain in the Lichfield Diocese, who is now the Vice Chairperson on the International Ecumenical Working Group for Deaf Ministry (IEWG) Board.

IEWG Online Conference Report by Mary Bucknall



About 60 people attended the online conference on November 12th, introduced by the Chairperson of IEWG, Tuula Mertanen from Finland. The chosen theme was “Encouraging and empowering Deaf Leadership in all areas of the Church.”

The main speakers were **Sofie Strid** and **Johan Wisser**, two Deaf priests from Sweden, who spoke on 1 Corinthians 12:12 “One Body, Many Parts” and about the challenges of integrating Deaf and hearing cultural norms in church worship, for example music.

There were three short talks signed by the following presenters:-
Helena Gade, a recently ordained Danish Lutheran pastor: Barriers during Education at the University of Copenhagen.

Rev'd Neil Robinson, Minister to the Deaf Community, Diocese of Salisbury: The struggle to talk to hearing people with interpreter in Pastoral Care situations.

Sarah Tupling, DAT General Synod representative (by video): High level governance power positions and the importance of giving a Deaf perspective in BSL to decision making at General Synod.

Tuula thanked the speakers, international sign language interpreters, BSL interpreters and Spoken English Language voicecovers.

Spotlight on the Regions

News from Cambs Deaf Church

by Canon Jan Smith, Minister working with Deaf and Deafblind people in Ely Diocese.

In August, Norwich Deaf Church held a farewell service for Rev. Anne Richardson, who has now moved to Guernsey. Anne is now working as a full-time minister for the Methodist Church in Guernsey. There were a lot of people there to give her a good send off.

Norwich Deaf Church are carrying on with their meetings on the 1st Saturday of every month.



In September, Deaf Churches in the East of England held a Harvest Festival in Huntingdon. Nick Palfreyman from Manchester led the service. Lots of people came from all over the East of England. They enjoyed the service, and cake & fruit afterwards. Everyone was very generous - four large bags of food were collected for the local Foodbank and also money was donated to the Foodbank.



News from Elaine Heath:

Fifteen people, all deaf turned up at Ely Cathedral on Advent Sunday, 30th November. The Sung Eucharist service was led by the Dean of Ely. Canon Jan Smith and Ros Hunt were the interpreters. Afterwards the group (plus one Hearing dog) went out for lunch together in the city.

Christmas Wordsearch based on the story of the Wise Men

H	T	R	Y	E	B	W	K	L	U	C	Z	M	P	Q
G	D	F	R	A	N	K	I	N	C	E	N	S	E	X
R	I	J	W	E	L	B	N	D	X	G	A	O	V	H
Y	H	F	W	M	P	N	G	E	B	W	Z	S	K	M
I	E	Y	T	N	Y	C	B	R	D	O	R	E	H	I
K	W	A	X	S	J	R	T	M	B	R	Y	G	J	H
M	Y	G	W	N	E	M	R	Z	P	S	E	M	N	U
E	V	O	T	Y	R	B	Q	H	T	H	B	A	Y	X
H	Y	L	P	Z	U	W	J	U	O	I	V	G	I	R
E	L	D	Y	W	S	C	M	R	A	P	Y	I	B	M
L	Y	B	T	R	A	B	S	T	A	R	W	C	Z	D
H	I	S	P	N	L	Y	B	Q	M	X	Y	H	W	R
T	A	L	U	B	E	W	V	C	T	R	I	V	P	E
E	T	B	N	Z	M	Y	B	E	A	I	B	R	X	A
B	P	C	H	I	L	D	V	M	K	Z	R	Y	W	M

Magi
East
Star
Jerusalem
Herod
King
Bethlehem

Mary
Child
Gifts
Gold
Frankincense
Myrrh
Worship

Dream



The Good Old Days

Pity the poor children
of today, with their calendars
stuffed with chocolates,
never to know the thrill
of opening a small cardboard door
and discovering behind it
a picture of a bell.



Brian Bilston

D Delight in the Lord
E Expect His presence
C Choose Peace
E Embrace Joy
M Make Room for Him
B Behold His Love
E Enter His Rest
R Remember His Faithfulness

Sarah Tupling

Christmas is....

By Irene Seager

Carol singing, candle light.

Holly berries glowing bright.

Robins cheerful, Santa's reindeer.



Interesting parcels begin to appear.

Sparkling decorations for all to see.

Tinsel, toys and Christmas tree.

Mary travelling to Bethlehem.

Angels bringing good news to all men.

Shepherd who heard it, a stable with hay.



Jesus was born on the first Christmas
day.

Only a Baby asleep in a stall,

Yet the Son of God, the Saviour of all.

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Spring Conference 2026

“Pray in the Spirit At all times for everything” Sue Whalley (D)



Worship – workshops – bible talks – fellowship - fun

15th – 17th May 2026

The Hayes Conference centre,
Swanwick, Derbyshire

Cost £250
(£50 deposit)



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