



# ICDF Networks

## *December 2021*

## Ability Not Disability



A perceptual barrier is described as an internal lens through which we view the world and the people around us that is based on beliefs, personal experiences and preferences. Throughout history the disabled were the outcasts and still today there are areas where much can be done to bring them into the mainstream of society. Disability can be intellectual, physical, sensory or mental according to the accepted definitions. Jesus set the example of embracing the outcasts. Although this newsletter has mainly been focused on the deaf community, we acknowledge that living with any type of disability has its own challenges to adapt to and to overcome

The photo above shows the famous painting, *Starry Night*, that is an oil painting by the Dutch Post-Impressionist painter Vincent van Gogh. It was painted in June 1889 and depicts the view from the window of his asylum room (with the addition of an imaginary village) at Saint-Rémy-de-Provence where he received treatment for mental illness

# ICDF Network for Deaf Signing

*Is it possible that this season's "Strictly Come Dancing" television programme in the UK had more regular viewers than ever before? If that is the case then Rose Ayling-Ellis and Giovanni Pernice are certainly standing at the centre of this interest. They established themselves as a firm viewers' favourite from the beginning. Besides dancing beautifully and working amazingly well as a couple, Rose is also deaf. From a quick internet search (Rose and Gio) we learn that Rose wears a hearing aid that helps her to hear some music, although she cannot hear the words, and she feels the beat. For the rest she reads her partner's body language and counts everything out as she dances. They also had an interpreter with them during rehearsals.*

*We have asked Linda Wells, leader of the Deaf Signing Network to give us her impression of the partnership and their dancing.*

## Hear With Your Eyes!!

I may be in America, but friends have kept me up to date about the beautiful deaf lady, dancing on "Strictly Come Dancing". Then Jan sent me a couple of YouTube videos and I have to confess I sobbed with joy!

Wow! Where do I begin??? During the silent section of the Couple's Choice dance, did you become aware of how amazing the deaf are.... living in our world? (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1GYplm3wqY>)

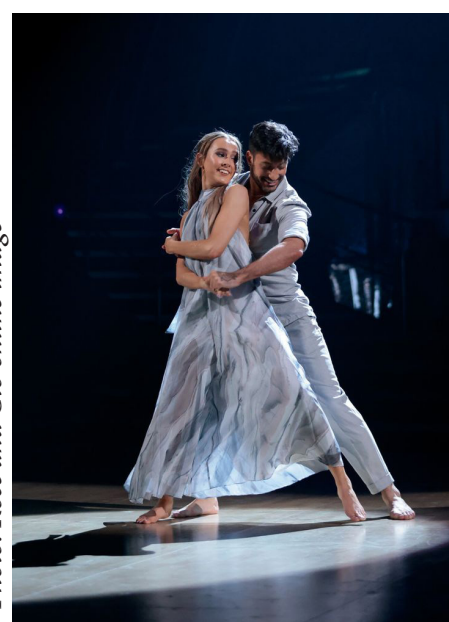


Photo: Rose and Gio online image

No cues of sound, no tone of voice, picking up accurate communication.... total silence.....and SIGHT .... Yes, Hearing with her eyes. We hear with our eyes but we don't realise it! We have ears so we kind of tune out our eye cues. There's a quote from a film in the 80/90's "Children of a Lesser God" and at one point she educated him on how she hears music with her eyes. SO profound!!! "Moonlight twinkling on a lake at night" seems to be how we interpret the flute. "Trees bending violently in the wind" .... how we interpret a full string orchestra playing a boisterous Concerto perhaps?

And dance? How does Rose do it? Her cues (like for a hearing partner) are taken from Gio, her professional partner, but he too is having to be extra sensitive to her needs. A look in the eye, a nod of his head, squeeze of the hand, and the rhythm of his movements..... she's reading them ALL expertly. My favourite though, is how God made our body to "feel" music and rhythm. Percussion pounds in the chest so we FEEL the beat (not just hear with our ears) but we don't even know we do. The deaf DO know! (Try blocking your ears next time you are at a party, until you FEEL the beat.)

One of my favourite memories is of when I taught my group of deaf friends at my church in Sutton Coldfield, England, a worship song to be performed in one of the services. I was a nervous wreck. I told them repeatedly, "Watch ME! Watch me!!" They smiled patiently. As the music began I began swaying in my seat on the front row, and signed the appropriate signs. After maybe... the first verse.... they had the nerve to take their eyes OFF me!!! Rude! But suddenly all the tension dissolved out of my body as I watched in amazement to my dear four friends dancing in total oneness... unified in movement (we could learn from that as a body of Christ) as they listened to the silent rhythm pounding in their chest..... who needs me? They felt it .... with their eyes!

Let's be that astute, and sensitive to each other's needs..... then get out there and love and appreciate the deaf!!

- Linda Wells

*We would like to introduce our readers to two amazing women who both make use of Deaf Signing during worship, in choreography and in life. To begin with we have the story of Pat Miller from Britain.*

## **A gift to the church to unite in worship**

Hi! My name is Pat Miller and I am involved with interpreting for deaf people in a variety of Christian settings. This is something I love and I consider it an honour and privilege to be able to serve God in this way.

I have always loved dance and have continued to be involved with dance, in one form or another, all my life. I danced in amateur musicals for a long time. Back in the early 1980s, when my children were young, we became part of an outreach group from the church we were attending. My husband was part of the leadership team and life was very busy with a young family.

At that time, I felt God was asking me to come away from dancing in the shows. I did this and I felt that this was going to be the end of my dancing. Some weeks later, during our church service, I felt God say 'now dance for me'. Wow!

I became involved with Christian dance and became a member of the Christian Dance Fellowship of Britain when it started in 1990. I have been involved ever since and served a number of years on our local committee.

Sometime in the early 1990s, I went to watch a production of 'Alpha and Omega' which was a Christian musical. I was sitting right on the front row and as the show started, a man standing directly in front of me, started doing 'something with his hands'. I didn't know what he was doing but I was immediately drawn to it and knew that whatever he was doing was something that God was calling me to do! At the end of the show, I went to talk to the man and discovered that he was a profoundly deaf musician interpreting the show in British Sign Language (BSL). I began to go to workshops that he was running and then enrolled on my Level One BSL course. I now support and interpret in various church services and settings, and I know that my main calling is interpreting in worship.



*Photo: Pat Miller*

It is my heart that deaf people are fully involved in all that we do in church worship and church communities and that we can all worship as one.

British Sign Language is a beautiful, rich language and when used in worship, strikes straight to the heart and seems to connect directly to God. It is amazing when deaf and hearing people can join together and worship God through this beautiful language!

At one of our Women's Conferences, we had about 30 deaf women. I was interpreting the worship and looked up to see this whole group of women worshipping as one through the beauty of their own language. Wow, what an experience! What an amazing gift to the church to be able to unite in worshipping God through this beautiful, rich and expressive language.

- Pat Miller

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*If you should be interested in connecting with others who make use of deaf signing in their dances, please contact us at [icdfworld@gmail.com](mailto:icdfworld@gmail.com)*

## Sign Language and Choreography

*Here we have an interview with Charlene Roberson from South Africa who shares with us her journey in Sign Language and explains how she uses it in her choreography*

*We heard that you started with sign language long ago. How many years would that be?*  
Going on 18 years.

*Please tell us what it was that made you interested in learning sign language?*

At Dunamis International Family Church, I started learning how to dance when I was about 21 years old and at that time I knew nothing about dancing.

About two years later a lady came to our church and did a Sign Language Introduction Workshop. It was really amazing to see how sign can be used in dance. As a result our church started a Sign Language ministry group. Six months later the group leader stepped down and I was her successor. I felt completely out of my depth and knew that I needed to up my skills. I bought a few Sign Language books, anything I could find. BSL (British), ASL (American)... anything. In 2004, two other girls in the dance team joined me in my weekly journey from Germiston to Randburg to attend a class given by a deaf couple teaching sign language as part of Worship at Rhema church in Randburg. We attended for a full year where I learned a lot. This was eye opening to see how you can actually get lost in worship using sign language, how intimate your conversation, expression and body language can be to take you to a whole other level of worship all together.



*Photo: Charlene and a group of dancers demonstrating a dance from a Signing workshop at a conference*

I still felt that something was missing, the vocabulary that the deaf couple could not teach us, so in 2006 I signed myself up for Saturday classes at WITS University Language School. This was where I learned the most, not just about the signing, but about the culture as well, facial expressions and body language.

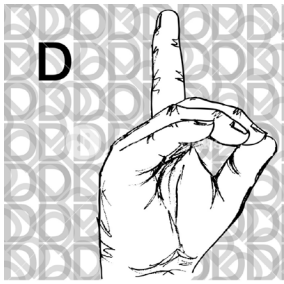
During this time, I also realized that there is not a universal sign language. Mind blowing, right? Every country has its own. The difference with South Africa is that even here, it is so diverse, that the signing is more community based rather than national and therefore Sign Language has not been recognized as one of our official Languages yet. We have a huge deaf community in South Africa but they are so isolated from other societies that no one really knows of their existence.

*When you use sign language in a choreography, do you use it in the usual way or do you adapt it to make it more “dancy”?*

That depends on what the music calls for. For “How great is our God” I use Sign Language only but at times during the song, where there is only music, I would put a few dance steps in. Most often when using worship songs, where the sign would be shorter than what they sing, for example “Lord”, and the song is “Loooo oooo oooo rd!” I will put in a dance step and make it more “dancy”

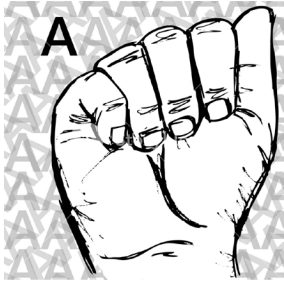
*For example, do you combine dance steps with the signing? Or do you have a signing section and a dancing section in the same song?*

When I choreograph a song, I would pray before I start and ask God what it is that needs to come through in this song, what does He want me to do. Signing, dancing, or both. I really try to work according to the music and sometimes it is both, sometimes only sign, and other times the words hit me so hard, I can't even move.



I also don't just keep to one country's signing. Sometimes the sign does not express the urgency or the greatness of that word, for example "need". I need food versus "I need you Lord". For the word "need" I will replace South African Sign Language (SASL), with American Sign Language (ASL), as ASL, expresses the word far better than the SASL version.

***Have there been any incidents in everyday life where you were in the position to make use of sign language?***

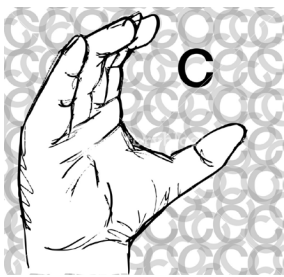


I do regular talks on Gender-Based Violence. I had the privilege of being invited to be on a panel discussing Gender-Based Violence at a deaf school in Katlehong in August 2021. Part of the panel was the CEO of Safer South Africa, the head of Visible Policing, a clinical psychologist from St Vincent School for the Deaf and myself. The whole day was conducted in Sign Language with interpreters for the hearing. There were only 5 of us that could hear in the whole school hall. Parents and children attended. It was amazing to be able to communicate with them in what I call my broken Sign Language as signing to someone and choreographing a song is so different. I love the community and hope to be working with them to fight for their rights and assist in the education of sign language within our police stations and hospitals.

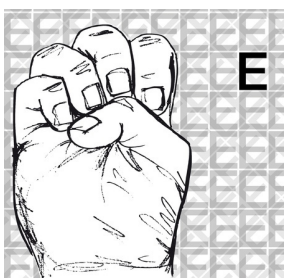


***What tip do you have for a person who is interested in learning how to sign?***

The biggest barrier to start for me was thinking that it was difficult. Just start somewhere, start with one song. When I started it was before "Google" and now everything can literally be googled. Don't let your fear stand in the way of God using you in a phenomenal, life changing manner.



Quick Story: One of the dancers I know told me that they were travelling to a country to attend a dance conference and they were going to minister at this dance conference. On the day they were practising all they could do to get it right, on time, etc. They took the bus to the venue. While on the bus they were practising their song in Sign Language. After they signed the song on the bus, a couple came to them and thanked them for ministering to them in their first language. They were asking God for a sign and the whole song they were signing was exactly what they needed to hear.



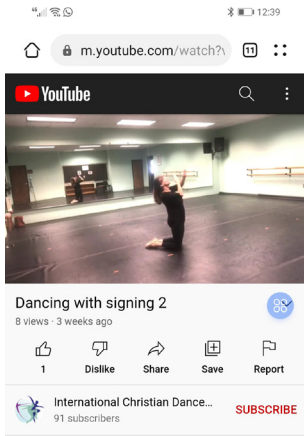
Don't think that the small thing you do today has no impact. We don't see the seeds growing under the ground and most often we do not see the fruit from the tree we planted 20 years ago. Just know that wherever you go and whatever you do, a life will be forever changed. The question is will it be a positive change or a negative change.

***If not you, who? If not now, when? If not here, where?***

- Charlene Roberson

<https://www.storyblocks.com/images/search/sign+language>

**ICDF Online Deaf Signing Workshop**  
 Theme: "Hear with YOUR eyes too"  
 Date: 19 February 2022  
 Time: 3.00-5.00pm GMT/UTC  
 More information to be released later in January



## Sign Dance Teaching Videos

Linda Wells, leader of the ICDF Network for Deaf Signing, has prepared teaching videos where she demonstrates how she uses Sign Language in her choreography. These can now be found on the ICDF YouTube channel or just follow the links below:

Dance with signing 1.... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8vneDw9V3o>  
 Dance with signing 2 .... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aU5J3LPjxM>  
 Dance with signing 3 .... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gez97u1b2w>  
 "I Can Only Imagine" ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqmYlFbc0c0>

## Interpreting at a service / event

*There are many things to take into consideration when interpreting at a service or event:*

### Interpreter position

Finding the most suitable position for an interpreter can be quite complicated and will vary depending on the venue. Usually, deaf attendees will sit near the front so that they have a good view of all that is happening plus a clear view of the interpreter. Ideally the deaf attendees should be able to see the interpreter and what is happening without having to turn their head from side to side.



Photo: Pat Miller

There are times when near to the front might not be the best place eg bright light shining on stage. Each service / event should be assessed individually by all involved to decide on the best position.

In a small venue or with a small group of deaf people, the interpreter may just be able to sit in front of the group. With a larger group the interpreter would need to stand up or stand on a small podium (checked by health and safety at the venue) to make sure that they can be seen by everyone.

For longer services / events, more than one interpreter will be needed.

### Lighting

This can be difficult especially as there can be quite complicated stage and screen lighting to be taken into consideration. A position needs to be found where the stage / background lighting is not interfering with the vision of the deaf attendees eg bright lights not shining in their eyes.

If the event / venue has dimmed lighting, the interpreter will need to be lit by a light that shows their face and hands clearly but is not shining in their eyes. It is good to develop a working relationship with the lighting technicians to decide how this can best be done.

### Clothing

Interpreters generally need to wear clothes in a plain, not too bright, colour so as not to distract from the signing.

- Pat Miller

# Choosing Ability - Not Disability

## Dance for Life: improving the quality of life for those with Parkinson's and Dementia

Parkinson's is a disorder of the central nervous system that affects movement, and often includes tremors and impaired balance. So what do you do when a Doctor tells you that you have Parkinson's Disease? Hopefully, you join a dance class! That is what Bruce, my late husband, did when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease or PD. I started teaching Dance for Parkinson's a couple of years before Bruce's diagnosis, not knowing what was coming. After I completed my training under Dance for Parkinson's SA, which is an affiliate of the Mark Morris Dance Company and Dance for PD in the USA, I started teaching classes in various venues around Cape Town.



*Bruce and Barbara Bain*

I have been teaching dancing in a Christian context for about 30 years. When I attended a Dance for Parkinson's class, I felt like I had come home. I got involved because I love dance, I love teaching, and I feel like I am helping people in the process. There is huge satisfaction in teaching a class of non-dancers, many of whom have mobility issues, and seeing them enjoy exploring movement just for the joy it brings. In the classes Bruce, who was not a dancer and really did not enjoy dancing much, found a new group of friends, because that is what they quickly became, who were in a similar situation as him and could relate to what he was experiencing both physically and mentally.

In addition to teaching Dance for Parkinson's classes I teach a Move to Music class at a nearby retirement centre. Many of the residents are in wheelchairs or have some form of dementia. Particularly when working with the dementia patients, seeing someone who normally sits and does not engage with their surroundings start to react to the music and then begin to move is a profound experience. The power of music and movement in bringing healing and joy should not be underestimated.

- Barbara Bain

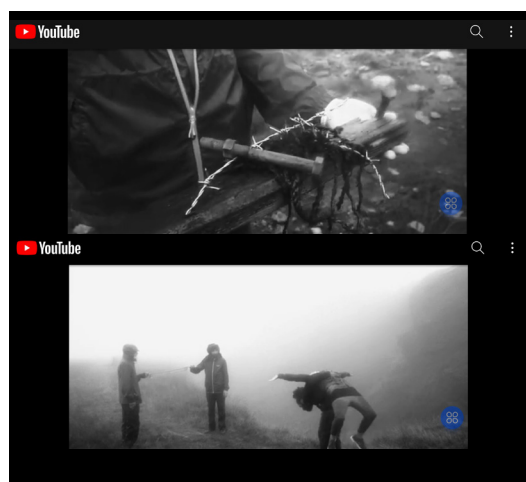
## Come To The Edge: overcoming fear

*Based on a poem, this experimental short film by Nick Breakspear and Paul Sparkes that includes Andy Raine and a group of dancers, explores the theme of overcoming fear through our faith in God. Although fear cannot be as easily seen as a physical disability, it can still have an impact on a person's life - almost like fencing a person in.*

### Come To The Edge

Come to the edge, he said.  
"We can't, we're afraid!" they responded.  
"Come to the edge," he said.  
"We can't, We will fall!" they responded.  
"Come to the edge," he said.  
And so they came.  
And he pushed them.  
And they flew."

- Christopher Logue



Watch the video at ... <https://youtu.be/zaAITUNVhu4>

Footnote: This poem was originally written for a poster advertising an Apollinaire exhibition at the ICA in 1961 or 1962, and there titled "Apollinaire Said". The poem is therefore often misattributed to Guillaume Apollinaire.

Source: <https://quotepark.com/quotes/1364429-guillaume-apollinaire-come-to-the-edge-he-said-we-cant-were-afrai/>