

The first national online service led in British Sign Language (BSL) will be broadcast this weekend by the Church of England.

The Church of England's National Deaf Ministry Adviser Rev Canon Gill Behenna will preside over the pre-recorded service to mark Bible Sunday, with signers from Swindon, Birmingham, Oxford and Stafford.

The prayers, sermon and personal testimonies will be given in BSL with interpreters translating into spoken English.

The service will highlight the [BSL Bible project](#), an ambitious programme to translate the Bible into BSL with a vision of providing access to Bible readings in BSL via videos, for personal use and during services.

Rev Behenna is a familiar face in the national online services as a regular BSL interpreter who is usually seen in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen during services interpreting the spoken word.

Speaking about the BSL Bible project, she said: "My vision is that when the hearing members of the congregation grab their Bibles and turn to a reading, then those who are Deaf will at the same time be able to grab their phones and watch a video of the reading in BSL."

The service is recording at [St Barnabas Church](#) in Swindon where there is a monthly Parish Holy Communion Service in BSL with spoken interpreters for the hearing congregation.

The preacher is Rev Dr Hannah Lewis, Lead Chaplain with Deaf people for the Diocese of Oxford.

She will invite the congregation to give thanks for those who work to increase access to the Bible.

"Let us ... give thanks for the word of God given to us, for the original authors, and those who have translated and interpreted it since and let us pray for all working to increase access to the scriptures today – translators, scholars, preachers and let us rejoice together that we have this precious gift from God," she will say.

The Church of England shares national online services every Sunday at 9am across [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [churchofengland.org](#). Each service receives an average of 150,000 views per week, accruing more than eight million views in 2022.

Analysis from May 2022 showed that 20 per cent of viewers watch with at least one other person, adding an estimated 30,000 views weekly, and excludes listeners to the Daily Hope phone line, and also instances where the service is put out on Hospital Radio, or in Prisons care homes.