

Meet The Hands In Praise Choir



Elaine Mainwaring
Director

Elaine is the director of the choir. She, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is the founder and a charter member of the "Hands In Praise" Christian choir. Elaine was a guest signer in the fall of 2008 at Bethel Lutheran Church. Several people approached her and asked if she would teach them how to sign to music. She was happy to say "yes." The Lord had been preparing her for this request. She taught a class in January of 2009 and they performed at Bethel Lutheran Church. She asked the class if they would like to sign more songs and most said "yes" and thus a choir in service to our Lord began. Elaine is a member of Traverse Christian Church, Windsor, Colorado.



Kristi Baker
Assistant Director

Kristi manages the Cerner Scheduling and Registration System - Banner Health. First inspired by Elaine's signing at church in early 2008 and later using her knowledge of the alphabet she tried to communicate with nurses after being intubated and couldn't talk. Following going into a coma and coming out of it to a full recovery, all by the grace of God, she was able to attend church again. Not only did she enjoy watching Elaine sign again, she signed up for the class Elaine was going to teach. Between the hospital experience, the class and resulting choir formation, Kristi, a January 2009 charter member, feels this is what God has intended for her. Kristi is a member of Bethel Lutheran Church, Windsor, Colorado.



Kathy Rickart
Promotions Chair

Kathy organized a workshop for 4-H Members to learn the 4-H Pledge in Sign Language while working as an Extension Youth Development Professional in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The teacher, a college student, in 1996, planted the "seed of desire to learn more." That opportunity came after Kathy retired and moved back to Colorado. Being terribly bored one night in February, 2014, with no more night meetings to go to, she jumped up, startled her husband, said, "I'm going to the sign language practice," and was out the door before he knew what happened. It has been a wonderful faith journey ever since. Kathy is a member of Bethel Lutheran Church, Windsor, Colorado.



Barb Hetzel
Scheduling Chair

Barb is the Co-Owner/Director of Border to Border Missions. She and her husband Jim, have lead teams for 22 years into Mexico to build different construction projects. Barb saw a lady signing parts of a song in church one Sunday. She wondered why she didn't sign all of it. After the service she approached her and asked, "why didn't you sign all of the song." Her reply, "Because I don't know all of the signs." Barb had always wanted to learn sign language so she was invited to the Hands In Praise choir practice that week in July, 2014 and the rest is history. Barb is a member of LaSalle Community Church, LaSalle, Colorado



Chris Arbegast
Fellowship Chair

Chris is a retired Pediatric Nurse, spent several years with therapeutic riding working with horses and special needs people, and taught preschool for several years. In September, 2014 she saw a sign outside a church about a "Signing Celebration" and decided to check it out. There were several groups that performed songs and she decided she would like to try it. There was a reception afterwards, but she couldn't remember which two groups she wanted to talk to so she asked God to lead her where he wanted her to go and she sat down with the Hands In Praise group. Here she is with the group today. Chris is a member of Generations Church in Greeley, Colorado.



Robyn Upton
Performing Member

Robyn is the ultimate Community Volunteer, helping with many community events. Being hearing impaired, Robyn got her first hearing aid in 2nd grade and learned to lip read. She lost all her hearing in her left ear in the late 1980's while attending Adams State College in Alamosa. She took an ASL sign language class in college and participated in a class sign language choir, performing Christmas songs at churches. The Hands in Praise Choir performed at her church, St Johns United Church of Christ, Greeley, CO. A friend in the choir invited her to join and she did in May, 2012. Robyn feels the music reflects her faith in a language both the Deaf community as well as the hearing community can enjoy, see, feel.



Catherine Benitz
Performing Member

After retiring from a career as a Special Education Educator, Administrator, Trainer and Consultant, working with students and families, Catherine moved to Colorado to be near her adult children and their families. Though not fluent in ASL, her career path and experiences with her son, who is hearing impaired, have brought her to many activities within the Deaf community. Her daughter had been a member of Hands in Praise while in college so she was excited to see the group still active in August, 2022 and willing to take on a novice.



Waynette Rand
Performing Member

Waynette is a semi-retired realtor and moved from Colorado Springs to Windsor to be close to her adult children and their families, after losing her husband of 41 years to cancer. She had been praying for God to lead her into ministry, little did she know it would be sharing her faith through ASL, which she had NO experience with. After watching Hands in Praise perform at her church, Faith Church of Windsor, Waynette questioned "is this my answer to prayer?" One of her favorite verses came to mind, Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all you heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will direct your paths." With gracious encouragement from the choir and her love of hymns she has found joy in expressing her love of Jesus with "Hands In Praise."



Becky Schneider
Performing Member

Becky grew up in Windsor before moving to Greeley. She raised two daughters and a son until he took up residence in heaven at a young age, changing her life in a heartbeat. She was trying to heal her broken heart when invited in 2022 to a Mother's Day event for grieving moms called Butterfly Kisses . She saw Hands In Praise (HIP) and was deeply touched. In 2023 she attended again, felt touched by HIP again. There was a nudge from God again so she kept their brochure. Months later, cleaning the drawer, she found the brochure and felt God's nudge again. She'd call later. God told her, "CALL NOW," so she obeyed and called. She is now a member of Hands in Praise feeling this is what she needs to help heal.

Photos by Jen Coet Photography, Windsor, CO - <https://www.jencoetphotography.com/>

"HANDS IN PRAISE" is an American Sign Language (ASL) Christian choir sponsored by Bethel Lutheran Church, Windsor, Colorado.

For information, call Director, Elaine Mainwaring, 970-686-5319 or go to www.HandsInPraiseASL.com

No experience is needed in sign language to join the choir.

You learn signs one song at a time.

