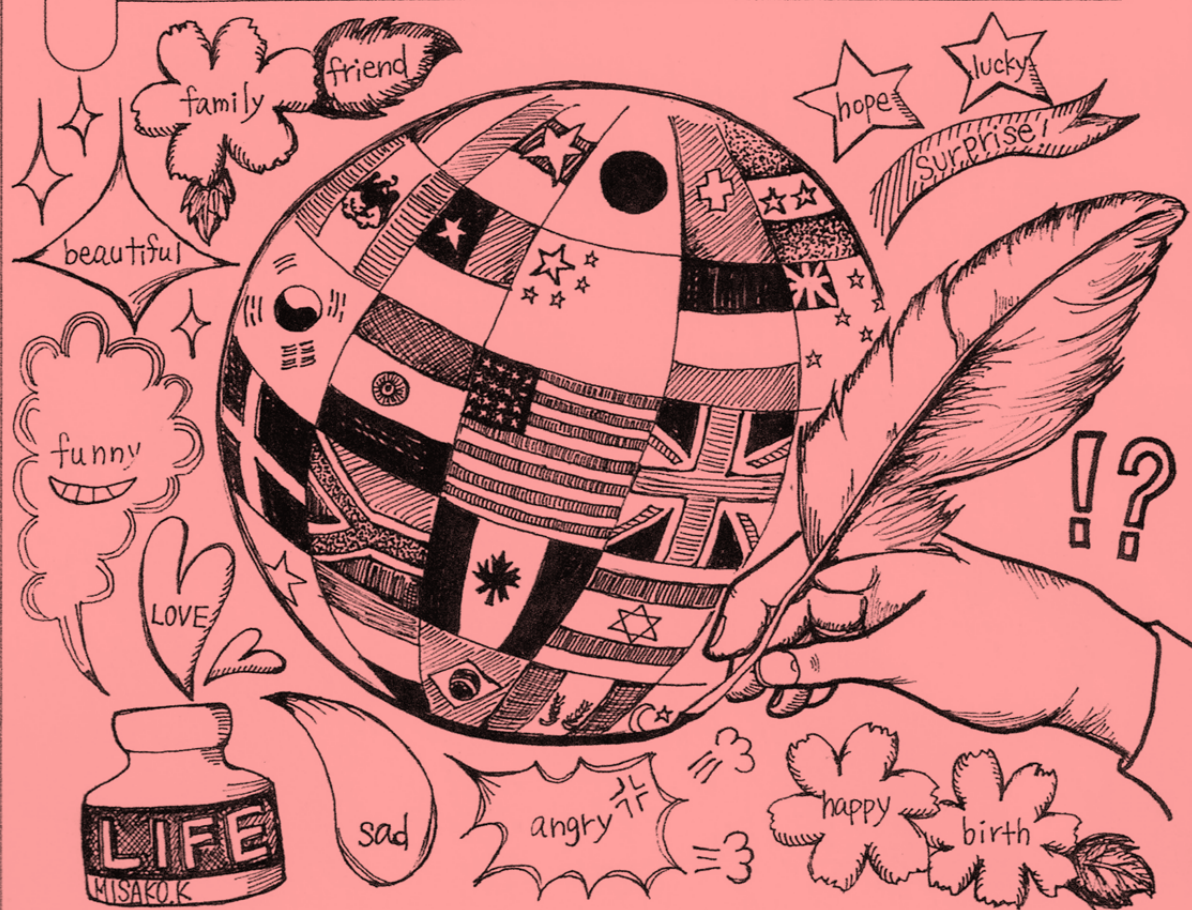


Belmont ESL *Writes*



Belmont United Methodist Church

2023

Introduction

Belmont ESL classes meet two mornings each week during the school year offering three levels of instruction for all proficiencies, as well as a multi-level conversation group. Teachers stress grammar, pronunciation, reading, writing, conversation and American history and customs. Based on the principles of “total immersion” language training, ESL (English as a Second Language) classes follow a teaching method of *listen-speak-read-write* design for each lesson plan.

Throughout the school year teachers provide writing exercises, usually following the topic of the current lesson. Students are encouraged to begin with short pieces on any subject. Most often these are autobiographical. From these each student can draw material to write his/her own story for our annual school-wide event, *Belmont ESL Writes!* Representative writers from each instructional level join with fellow students, church members and community neighbors at a community event in the spring as their stories are read aloud.

Imagine if you can, living in a new country and trying to learn the language. Imagine that the alphabet is different; maybe you now must read from left to right. Now imagine that your teacher wants you to write a story entirely in this new language only a few short months after beginning your study of the language. Imagine that!

Here are stories written by our new friends, our new neighbors, possibly by future American citizens. We hope you enjoy reading them as much as they enjoyed creating them. Thank you for supporting the Belmont ESL Adult Education program.

Belmont ESL Adult Education Staff
Nashville, Tennessee
April 20, 2023

Belmont ESL Program Staff

Instructors

Mary Jane Duke, Mary Kaye Jordan, Dick Bowers, Jane DuBose, Sally Tiven, Joyce Eyler

Substitute Teachers

Joanne Beckham, Joyce Eyler, Charles Hewgley, Tandy Jarvis, David Jarvis

Admissions Coordinator

Cleatus Morehead

Business Manager

Charles Hewgley

Volunteers

Mary Crichton, Mike DuBose, David Jarvis, Tandy Jarvis, Susan Kirby,
Patsy Lanigan, Sheri Sellmeyer, Steve Stroud, Karen Roberts , Mike Yatsinko

The 2023 *ESL Writes!* Story Collection is dedicated to the memory of the late, long-time ESL teacher Dr. Frank E. Jones, III. See page 26.

Editing and layout for this book by Charles Hewgley

The original cover art was drawn by Misako Kamei of Japan. She is a former student of Mary Kaye Jordan.

Belmont ESL Writes! 2023 Finalists

			<u>Page</u>
The Girl Who Could Not Pull the Doors	Sabrina from Brazil	Conversation Class	1
My Work Experience During the Pandemic	Flory from Guatemala	Level 3	2
They Call Me Niko	Monica from Mexico	Conversation Class	3
My Journey	Carmen from Venezuela	Level 3	5
The Most Exhausting Day	Yuurin from Japan	Level 5	7
Cultural Differences	Chizuru from Japan	Level 4	9
A Korean Funeral	Jungah from South Korea	Level 5	11
Moms Around the World Know How to Embarrass Their Children	Dima from Russia	Level 4	13
My Daughter	Aracely from Mexico	Level 3	14
The Fearless Child	Susete from Brazil	Level 4	15
The Smell of my Days at the Farm	Bruna from Brazil	Level 5	16
The First Gift for a Baby	Tomoyo from Japan	Level 5	17
Words of Gratitude for My Spiritual Mentor - Rosy	Angela Maria from Colombia	Level 3	19
Is Your Life on the Table?	Rafaela from Brazil	Level 4	21
Belmont ESL Faculty 2022-2023			23
Belmont ESL Volunteers			25
In Memoriam, Dr. Frank Emerson Jones, III			27
Belmont UMC ESL Ministry Thriving After More Than 50 Years			28
Belmont ESL Photos			30

Belmont English As a Second Language

Belmont United Methodist Church
2007 Acklen Avenue; Nashville, TN 37212

More than fifty years ago, a small group in Nashville saw a need to offer English classes for the neighborhood's growing immigrant community. After a program was started by Vanderbilt University Medical School Faculty Auxiliary, Belmont United Methodist Church offered a place to meet and has enthusiastically supported the adult English as a Second Language (ESL) program ever since, generously providing space for classes and support for thousands of English language learners.

Prior to 2013, Belmont's ESL program received some funding from a federal government agency. When that funding ended, the members of Belmont UMC chose to continue the ESL classes as an outreach ministry of the church. The Belmont ESL Program is financially self-sustaining.

Most mornings during the school year, students from different countries eagerly meet to study English, practice conversation and learn about American culture.

Learning English changes peoples' lives. Over the years, many students have gone on to get their GEDs, pursue higher education, get better jobs and receive their US citizenship. More importantly, students become friends with people from other lands and other faiths, and in the process, discover that we are all much more alike than we are different.



The Girl Who Could Not Pull the Doors

By Sabrina from Brazil

It was a cold day to stay outside. She was shaking from head to toe. She was not a girl from the North. She was used to wearing shorts and t-shirts all the time. She liked to walk by the sea and feel the warm breeze on her face. She used to think the waves were the most peaceful sound in the world. Now everything was different. She wasn't close to the ocean. There was snow everywhere. Worse than that, no matter how much she tried, she couldn't open the doors and go inside to warm her freezing body up.

Okay, this story may sound weird. But this is how it happened. She tried once, twice, three times. Everywhere she walked, she read, "we are open." However, whenever she tried to go in, some force stopped her. The first time she tried, she thought the door was locked. In the second one, she saw people inside the famous café. She heard music and sounds of laughter. She thought she would be welcomed there. Then she forced the door. It didn't work. She did it again. Still nothing.

Suddenly, everything changed. A bad mood came burning from the inside. "Are they trying to kill me? I'm freezing here. I only want a mug of hot chocolate. I would do everything for a few minutes in a heated space." She felt sad and lonely. She started to think how all the doors were always open for her back home.

Although, she was not the kind of lady who gave up. "I'm strong! I'm brave!" she said to herself. So, she decided to find a better place where she could fit in. She walked a little bit more in that frozen city. She contemplated the parks. She looked amazed at the trees missing their leaves. The girl paid attention to the kids playing in the snow and felt her heart warm up. At this point, she felt confident enough to try to open a different door. This café looked cozy. It had a bucolic atmosphere.

On the door, she could read "push." Something strange occurred when she was about to do it; someone pushed open the door. At this moment, this magical moment, this Brazilian girl realized that she was always trying to pull the door when she should push it. Do you know why? Because in Portuguese, her native language, the word *puxe* sounds like "push," but means pull. All the time, she was being fooled by a grammatically false friend. She could feel mad at herself. She could go home. But she laughed a lot, entered, and had a delicious mug of hot chocolate. ♦

My Work Experience During the Pandemic

By Flory from Guatemala

The Covid -19 Pandemic began in China at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020. It became known worldwide as a pandemic and was declared an international emergency. Later it was declared a quarantine which suspended in person classes for all educational entities and for a major part of work entities, leaving very few businesses authorized to continue working Supermarkets by being stores that supplied food products and items used by people daily were considered essential.

Being employed by Kroger I had to continue working while my family stayed at home. The only one who had to leave to work was me. There were days of fear and worry about the infection and the fear of infecting myself and that I might infect my family who was staying at home. It was worrying me when I heard that many people were dying. Each morning upon leaving the house I asked God that he might protect me and my co-workers. I prayed that I was using adequate protection to keep myself safe as well as my co-workers. We were disinfecting the carts that were used and the entrance and exit doors of the store. The attendance of the clients was less, and children were not seen accompanying the shoppers.

On one of those days, they called together all of the employees in order to inform us that one of our co-workers was infected with COVID. Almost all of the co-workers worried a little more about the protection that was more strict with the use of a mask and use of sanitizer, etc. The problem that we had was that they ran out of the products that we were using to protect ourselves like alcohol and masks. My husband began producing fabric masks which my family and I were using. We provided masks for our friends. I had to use a mask almost 12 hours a day and the moment that I returned I took off my shoes in the garage and immediately took a bath before going to greet the others who were also worried about me. I felt satisfied that I was able to cooperate with the store and with the people that attended and that came to buy at the store. It was a very interesting experience.

I am grateful to God for His protection and blessing for me and my family during these difficult times. ♦

Teacher's note: Flory and her family delivered the masks her husband made to former Conversation Class leader, Peggy West and to Mary Jane and her family in May of 2020. These well-made masks helped to keep them safe. Flory continued to work during the Pandemic and when her schedule allowed she attended her Zoom ESL class.

They Call Me Niko

By Monica from Mexico

They call me Niko. I'm 14 years old -- I know it is not the best way to introduce you to my story -- but oh boy! Getting here to this day, to this age, has not been easy or ordinary. I was born in the north of Mexico, I remember I had a lot of brothers and sisters, my mother could not feed us all, she did not produce enough milk. I was the smallest one, my siblings who were bigger than me would not let me eat, so my birth mother tried to kill me. Sounds horrible, but the vet explained that it would have been a merciful act.

The house where we were born was under renovation, so our owner offered me to the architect who was remodeling the place in an attempt to save me from a certain death. He gladly took me.

I was 3 weeks old when I got to my new home, I was so little that I could fit on one adult hand. They named me Niko. Everyone fell in love with me, especially the middle daughter, Monica, but not the mom, she was mad because she didn't want dogs to mess up her house.

They fed me with milk for babies, but I was so young, I needed mommy's milk. One week later I was not eating, and I was having breathing problems. They took me in the middle of the night to the emergency pet care. I was so sick that the vet said it was probable that I would not survive it. The mom prayed for me, promising God that if he saved me they would love me and take care of me forever. After one week at the hospital, I was released. I survived for the second time in my young life.

Then I had a family who loved me. I have to tell you I'm not the kind of dog who runs after a ball and who is messy or naughty. I can say proudly I'm a clean dog. I have never destroyed anything and if I run I'll do it with a purpose. Why would I run after a ball? I'm too gracious for that.

The years passed and the boyfriend of Monica, Fernando, asked her to marry him. The first thing she said was "yes!, but my Niko goes with us wherever we go." She never imagined that destiny was written far from there. One year after getting married, Fernando was transferred by his company to Nashville, Tennessee in the USA. Monica said, "we are going, but of course my Niko goes with us." And so, it was. I have to confess I love it here; the houses are always warm; I don't get cold or hot anymore and I can run free in the backyard. But my human mom wasn't happy, she was missing her life in Mexico, her family and friends, the days were so long I could feel her sadness. I used to put my head on her knee and look at her, I can't talk of course but with my eyes I said that everything would be fine, and I was right. Eventually she found motivation and new friends who became family. She

learned to love this country and call it home.

But like every story when all looks to be fine something unpredictable happens. One day in a dog park I was attacked by a big pit-bulldog. He bit my belly and again I was admitted to the emergency pet care. I was in so much pain, the wounds were so deep, my human mom cleaned and healed my wounds every 8 hours for 3 weeks and I survived again! I started to suspect that maybe I'm actually a cat with nine lives.

Suddenly my human mom had a big belly, months later a baby came to our house. Then the baby who just slept and ate became a chubby toddler who liked to touch me with his sticky hands and pull my ears. I didn't like him. I used to hide from him. But he grew up and now that kid is my best friend. He learned to pet me, he always has time for me, to hold me and say that he loves me. I appreciate that because the adults are always in a hurry. I don't understand why. They have so many errands, so many appointments, worried about being late every single day.

If I could talk, I would say to them that life is more, I know I'm just a dog, but I appreciate the good things of this world: running, smelling flowers, cuddling, being so happy just seeing the person you love walk through the door.

I'm 14 years old, I understand I don't have much time left in this world. I feel more tired every day and I sleep most of the time. But also, I know that I have had a wonderful life, full of adventures and love. My goal in this life has always been making my family happy and I can assure you I have achieved it. ♦

My Journey

By Carmen from Venezuela

My name is Carmen. I'm a 39 year old woman with a great history behind me. I was born in Venezuela in a time where the situation in my country was very different than it is today. I lived with my parents and my three siblings -- two brothers and my oldest sister Yuly. I studied in Venezuela my secondary and my college and graduated as an accountant with a Masters in auditing.

After I finished secondary school, I moved to another city in my country. I had to do that because in my birth city there wasn't a university, and it was a very difficult process. At that time, I was 17 years old and the process of looking for a place to live and study was very difficult. I found an established house where the people received me with open arms. Thanks to my grades I won a scholarship that allowed me to live without working, but just for a time. After that I had to find a job, and I did it. Where did I find it? In the university -- what a goal, in the same place I worked, and I studied. I couldn't believe it.

My time in the university was one of the finest times in my life with ups and downs like everything in this life. In 2007 I finally graduated. My dream had come true and now it was time to work. I found a job in an accountant office. I learned a lot there, and it let me move to a different place bigger than the other one and with more privacy. I worked in that office for 4 years, but my objective was to work auditing in one of the big four companies. Those are KPMV, PwC, Deloitte and Ernst and Young, but that objective will be realized years later when in Chile I worked for one of them.

In 2013 my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. That was a shock to my life, and my stability because my mother was the center of my life and one of the reasons for me to move to Chile in 2019 to help her struggle with cancer and have a better life. But the cancer became much stronger than we ever thought, and my mother passed away in March 2021.

Due to the COVID pandemic and border restrictions, I was unable to travel to Venezuela to physically say goodbye to my mother and that left me in great pain. It only comforts me to know that I gave my all and struggled financially to give her quality of life in her last days.

Since then, my life isn't the same. The fact of losing my mother changed me forever. It felt like an earthquake, a hole that can never be filled. To lose my mother was the worst thing that could ever happen to me. She lives in me in every breath, in every action, she goes on and on in my mind and my heart.

I can say that my mother was the strongest being I have ever known. A woman who fought with all her might until the end, and she is the reason why I keep fighting for my dreams.

I continue to honor her. I am taking steps to find the path of happiness. This is how I came to the United States for the first time in 2022 to visit some friends and to visit the parks in Florida. I fell in love with this country; the culture, the places, everything about this country is perfect. It has all the things that you are looking for. If you want the beach, you have Florida or California. If you want desert, you go to Utah. If you want snowy mountains, you go to Montana. Well, the United States has it all.

That's part of my journey. Many countries, many histories and all of it left me learning from some good times, some bad times, but we have to embrace everything that comes to us and live and enjoy every moment. I'm still here step by step.. ♦

The Most Exhausting Day

By Yuurin from Japan

I remember the day I moved to the U.S. like it was yesterday. It has actually been more than five months ago. We moved here due to my husband's work.

I was excited to come to the U.S., but just the thought of traveling with an active 3-year-old girl and a 2-month-old baby was enough to make me dread it. Furthermore, we had decided to bring our cat with us.

The day of leaving Japan, we had to transfer to Atlanta for our flight to Nashville. It took about 14 hours from Japan to Atlanta, two hours for the connection, and one hour from Atlanta to Nashville, for a total of more than 17 hours. Would the children be able to be good, and would the cat be able to endure such a long trip? There was nothing but anxiety.

On the plane, I had requested a seat with a bassinet (baby bed), but, unfortunately, my request was not granted. I held the baby in my arms for 14 hours. We arrived in Atlanta just as my arms were about to reach their limits. I was thankful for my daughters; they were quieter than expected during the flight. "Nashville is only one hour from Atlanta! We are already there!" I thought.

But the hardest part was not over. That was the security check to enter the U.S. between the flight connection. The security checks here are stricter than they are in Japan. And the atmosphere is much more serious. My 3-year-old daughter was already anxious when she saw the stern-looking people in uniforms. Unlike when we left Japan, the cat had to be taken out of its cage for inspection. My cat is very temperamental. And he was in a bad mood after being squashed under a seat for 14 hours. When we took him out of his cage, his fur stood on end, and he growled. My husband held the angry and shivering cat in his arms to prevent him (the cat) from escaping. Then they went through the security inspection. If the cat escaped, we would have to say goodbye forever.

Then it was my daughter's turn. She carried her favorite Minnie Mouse backpack and her best friend Baby Yoda (her toy). As I put her backpack and her Baby Yoda in the basket for inspection, she shouted to the security officer, "Give me back my Minnie Mouse!! What are you doing to my Yoda!?" She was furious and crying in a loud voice. I told her to go through the security gate, but she refused. "No!" When I looked at my husband to ask him to help her, he was struggling to put the cat back in the cage. They were fighting. Seeing such a horrible situation, my daughter felt that she was now in a very scary place. She refused again. "No! Never!!"

I thought she would follow me if I went first, so I went through the security line, but she ran the other way. She screamed, “I’m scared!!!” Because I was holding the baby, it was difficult to catch the excited 3-year-old child. So, I looked at my husband again, and I saw that he and the cat were still fighting, and my husband’s arms had been clawed.

When we somehow managed to get through the security check and picked up our luggage, everyone was exhausted except the baby. She was sleeping peacefully. What a good girl!!

I barely remember the flight from Atlanta to Nashville. We somehow made it to Nashville. My husband took a picture at the Nashville airport to commemorate our arrival. I had no energy left to smile, though.

We stayed at a hotel that day. The next day, as we were getting ready to leave, a new problem occurred. The cat disappeared. I had taken him out of his cage after arriving at the hotel room. I looked on shelves, in drawers, in the bathroom, under the bed, everywhere in the room, but I could not find him. “It is my first day in the U.S. Am I going to say goodbye to my dear pet on such a day?” Such a thought crossed my mind.

We looked for him for more than an hour. Finally, I noticed cat hair had fallen under the bed board. There was a gap of less than four inches in the bed board. My husband didn't think a cat would be able to be in such a narrow space. But there he was. I put my hand in the gap and managed to pull him out, but he scratched my arm a lot.

Finally, all my family could reach our new house in the U.S.

This is the story of the day we moved here. It was the most exhausting day of my life.. ♦

Cultural Differences

By Chizuru from Japan

When I came to the U.S., I had a few culture shocks.

First, it was the first time we went to a supermarket. My husband and I went to the cash register with the vegetables, meat, and other items we wanted to buy. The cashier asked us, "How are you today?" My husband replied, "Good, thanks. And you?" I was not sure what was going on and watched the conversation between them.

The cashier looked at the items we were buying and asked, "Are you ready for a special dinner?" My husband and he made small talk. I thought he was my husband's friend. If not, their conversation was strange because they were talking as if they were talking to a friend.

When we got back to the car, I asked my husband, "Do you and the cashier know each other?" My husband answered, "No. It was first time I met him." And he continued, "It seems to be normal in the U.S. for store clerks or people on the street to make small talk."

In Japan, you never talk to store clerks about personal matters or so-called small talk, unless you get to know them. The clerk will only ask you what is necessary regarding the merchandise. For example, "Does it come in a bag?" "Do you need chopsticks?" and so on. Also, in Japan, there is honorific language, which is used differently from the language used with friends. To an American, on the one hand, Japanese customer service can seem polite and, on the other hand, a bit unfriendly.

After I learned about this culture in the U.S., I wanted to talk about it the next time I went to the supermarket. Now I am able to communicate a little more by asking questions such as, "What kind of snacks do you recommend?" Of course, I also buy extra things.

Next, I will tell about my first visit to Starbucks Coffee. I ordered a café latte. After that the staff said, "May I have your name?" I was confused and thought I had heard wrong, then I looked at her quizzically and replied, "I'm Chizuru." Needless to say, she could not understand me at first, so I told her by separating each spelling. Anyway, I was so surprised that she asked me my name because she was not my friend.

A few minutes later when my café latte was ready, the staff said, "Chizuru!". Finally, I understood why I was asked my name. That was because they let me know when the order was ready. In Japan, we

also have a Starbucks Coffee. However, you are never asked your name. And the staff would probably call “The person who ordered a café latte.”

I have known that there is a culture in the U.S. of calling each other by first names. Since I live in the U.S., I actually found that everyone calls each other by their first name, from ESL teachers and classmates to store clerks.

In Japan, we call each other by our last name unless we are friends. Moreover, we add honorific title “*san*” because it is impolite to call someone only by their last name. For example, my boss and colleagues call me “(last name) *san*”. In addition, we also use another honorific title “*sama*”, it is more polite than “*san*”. It is often used if you are a customer.

I like both American and Japanese culture. In particular, I like the American culture of calling each other by first names, as it seems to bring people closer together.. ♦

A Korean Funeral

By Jungah from South Korea

He was crying. His head dropped and his shoulders were shaking. His body was curled up with deep sorrow and everybody could feel his sadness. He was in his middle 30's, too early to lose his mother. I had never seen him cry before. He was a strong man with a strong personality, but now he was just a young man who had lost his only parent. I never heard much about his father. I think my father didn't know much about him because my grandfather passed away when my father was three years old.

The immediate family members wore funeral clothing. The men wore black suits and ties, but the women wore a different wardrobe. It was white and was the Korean women's traditional clothing, (*hanbok*). My mom had to double-fold my garment's sleeves because none of the mourning clothes fit a nine-year-old girl. There were lots of people in the funeral home. Most mourners sat down around a low dining table (*bob-sang*), sitting on the heated floor. They were eating, drinking, and chatting with each other as a small group. It looked so crowded and was so loud that it seemed like the middle of the day at a busy farmer's market. On the other side of the room, my parents stood in front of my grandmother's picture and were receiving the mourners who wanted to pay their respects to our family.

The first day had gone so fast. On the second day my mom took me to the room that had lots of stainless-steel drawers from top to bottom. A man opened one of the drawers and my grandmother was inside there. She looked like she was sleeping with a bandage on her head. She had had emergency brain surgery a few days earlier, but she did not survive the operation. The man told us we could say good-bye to her. That was the last time I saw her real face.

The last day arrived, the day of the burial. My family members got on the bus and went to the graveyard near her farmhouse. My father's friends carried my grandmother's colorfully decorated coffin around her village and sang funeral songs until everybody arrived at the graveyard.

At that moment, I saw my step-grandfather. He looked very empty. I only remember he stood in the dark and he didn't cry. Their marriage had started a short time after the Korean War ended. He and my grandmother were both from the North, but they did not know each other there. He fled from North Korea to avoid the military draft and had to leave his wife and children behind. He thought they would soon be reunited, but that never happened. After the War started, she fled from the North. She had my father and two other young children to protect. While crossing the border, she lost her oldest girl.

After the end of the war, they met and settled down together in the north of South Korea. They were together for over 30 years. Now he had lost his wife again. At least, her death gave him a clear ending. As for his first wife and children in the North, he knew nothing.

My grandfather passed away when I was a high school student. We buried him next to my grandmother and their youngest son who had died when he was in his early 30's. My family had visited once or twice every year until this graveyard became a new town. Now they are gone but remain in my family history. ♦

Moms Around the World Know How to Embarrass Their Children

By Dima from Russia

September 1 in Russia is called the Day of Knowledge, the first day of school. Schoolchildren from all over the country go back to school. Schools organize a welcome event called a "*Ruler*," where students watch different performances prepared by students and teachers. Usually these are songs, dances, poetry recitations, demonstrations of various sports classes. (Karate, gymnastics...)

When I was young and in the 5th grade, I was invited to perform at the same event with a girl from another class with a song about a red-haired boy and his girlfriend. I was young, and my mother wanted her son to be a young star, so she gave her consent to perform at this event

The day had come. We are performing in front of the whole school, one of three performances in front of almost 2,000 schoolchildren. The song was about an ugly boy and a beautiful girl. I will never forget the words: "What a freckled boy I am, what a freckled boy I am, but I lured her with something."

This holiday passed and the next day, I went to study for the first time in high school. Every high school student passing by me hummed these lines to me "What a freckled boy I am, what a freckled boy I am, but I lured her with something." This song followed me the whole school year. It is very good that the next year they did not remember it.

So, I was a star in school for one year and thankfully only that one year. I have never sung that song again (or any other song) in public --except in the shower. . ♦

My Daughter

By Aracely from Mexico

My name is Aracely and I'm from Mexico. When I came from my country I went to Washington state and stayed there for six years and moved to Tennessee in 2001. I met my boyfriend a few months later and I moved to live with him. I had my first child Michael in 2003. And then my second in 2004. Michelle is her name. My kids were growing very well and were healthy. They had a lot of energy.

One day I decided to start comparing my kids and I noticed that Michelle was not doing what her brother at the same age had done. I started to wonder what's going on with her. So, I decided to pay more attention to her actions and notice that she was acting a little differently.

I started asking my family and friends what they thought about Michelle, and they kept saying don't worry too much. Every kid is different. She was 15 months, and don't get me wrong, she was doing everything a toddler should be doing, just not saying words. So, I took her to her pediatrician and told him that she was acting differently. He asked what is she doing and what does acting differently mean to you? I told him that she wasn't paying attention when I called her name, putting her toys in lanes, staring at things without blinking, covering her ears all the time and always looking for corners in the house to sit.

They referred Michelle to Vanderbilt. They asked me so many questions and observed how Michelle played with toys. After 6 hours they told me, we think she has autism, but you will be getting a letter in the mail with the diagnosis. When they told me that she was under the umbrella of autism, it didn't surprise me. I was expecting that. So, my question to them was, what can I do to help her? They gave me lots of information and Michelle started taking therapy like speech, ABA, and occupational.

Right now, she is 18 years old and she's going to graduate this year. She is a wonderful *señorita* full of dreams like any other teen. I'm really proud of her. She's planning her next goal and I'm going to be next to her to help in any way she wants. I pray for her all the time. I know God has Michelle's hand, and she will be doing great things.

Parents if you think that something is wrong with your children don't hesitate to speak up for them. ♦

The Fearless Child

By Susete from Brazil

It was a normal day, at least I thought so!! It was mid-afternoon, at the end of the school term and, as in all schools, teachers in Bom Jesus da Aldeia were having student evaluation conferences. The school, “Bom Jesus da Aldeia”, is a school in a very large area, with buildings very far from each other. The office where we met was very distant from the elementary school.

After the meeting with the teacher, I went to the elementary school building. I saw people running towards the block I was going to, where my son studied. But I didn't pay attention to the movement. And I started looking for Willian, my son. But I couldn't find him and continued towards the building where people were crowding around.

When I walked over and looked up, my heart nearly jumped out of my mouth. It was my son, climbing the fixed ladder which surrounded the gutter and gave access to the roof of the building. He reached the roof of the building. While we were all terrified down there, he calmly climbed up, grabbed the frisbee and left before help even arrived.

After the scare, I went to talk to him to understand what had happened. Simple, in the mind of a 6 year old. He was playing with Mariazinha, a classmate. He threw her Frisbee too hard, and the Frisbee landed on the roof. The girl started to cry, and he went to get her toy so that she wouldn't be angry with him. He didn't understand why people were screaming and calling him. He just wanted to rescue his classmate's toy. ♦

The Smell of My Days at the Farm

By Bruna from Brazil

It was four in the morning and very dark outside when I woke up, smelling the earth that was wet from the rain that had just started. I was traveling with my mother and my cousin, and it was Winter Break. We used to go every Winter Break to my uncle's farm.

When I was a child, the most important week of the year for me was Winter Break, which in Brazil starts in June. As a tropical country, the winter in Brazil is characterized-by being both dry and rainy. That rainy morning was my first day on the farm and I could not have been happier. Looking back at that time, and the feeling that I felt when I was in that place, today I know that it was freedom. I could run-everywhere, play all day, and eat as many times as I wanted. It was paradise, wasn't it?

Basically, every day we did the same things: wake up around five in the morning, get our horses saddled up and go to the pasture to help uncle Adão (Adam). He was my mom's uncle, but my cousin and I called him uncle, too. We helped him with everything around the farm, and we were so happy doing it.

My favorite part of the day was when my uncle and his workers were milking the cows and, of course, when he got me a cup with fresh milk with powdered chocolate. For my cousin, his favorite part was to feed the chickens and pigs. After a busy beginning of each day, we were free to play. We swam in the lakes and rivers and fished as well. I have never forgotten the smell of the trees around the river and the mangos that we ate from the top of the mango trees.

After long hours of playing and swimming, we would head for home and as we approached the house I could smell the fresh coffee, corn cakes, and cheese bread (*pão de queijo*).

Everything was so fresh and natural since the fruits, vegetables, eggs, milk, and meat were all grown at the farm. At the end of the day, we all used to sit around a bonfire, roasting corn and listening to the old people tell stories about their lives. I'll never forget the smell of my clothes that were filled with the smoke from our magical bonfires. ♦

The First Gift for a Baby

By Tomoyo from Japan

A name is the first gift for a baby from its parents. Naming is kind of like breathing new life into a baby, and the baby starts its life with a unique, precious, and loving gift. When I had a baby, it took a long time for my husband and me to make up our minds on what name we would choose. In addition to our cautious personalities, I was keenly aware of the heavy responsibility of taking the first step for this new life because of my own experience.

“Find out where your name comes from.” My teacher assigned this homework when I was in elementary school. In my country, parents generally choose sounds and identify Chinese characters that correspond to those sounds for baby names. My name “Tomoyo” has two Chinese characters; the first one is pronounced as “*tomo*” and means “knowledge”, and the other one is pronounced as “*yo*” and means “world”. Up until that point, I had never heard of the origin of my name from my parents, but judging from my name's characters, I expected that my parents chose my name because it meant a person who is full of the knowledge of the world, or possibly a respectable person who is known by people in the world.

I was excited to ask my parents and believed they would be pleased to tell me a lovely story. However, as soon as I asked my mom, she hesitated and talked with my dad. I did not understand why their faces became so serious, and I was even getting anxious that there was a secret concerning my birth. My older brother's name took a Chinese character from my dad's, but nobody in my family including great-grandparents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts had the same character as mine. That fact also made me uneasy. After discussing for several minutes, my mom started to talk to me slowly and carefully. Her explanation was that my name had come from a famous pop singer and my dad had been a big fan of hers, and my mom also had liked her. That was the only reason. There was not any special meaning and there was not any lovely story.

That was so disappointing to me. At the same time, I was at a loss on how to give a presentation in front of the class the next day because I did not want to say to everyone that my parents had loved an old pop singer so much that they had named their baby the same name. I easily imagined that no sooner would some mean classmates hear it than they would tease me. I had to avoid that, so I asked my parents, “Can I present to the class that my parents hoped I would be a person full of the knowledge of

the world?” They said, “That’s great! How wonderful your name is!” This is how the origin of my name was determined. I decided it by myself on behalf of my parents.

We named my son Eito. It is pronounced similarly to “eight” in English. There are a few reasons why we chose it, and among these, what we considered most important is that the name could be easily pronounced and memorized by everyone in the world. That is because we were likely to move abroad sometime in the future for my husband’s job. Both of us had faced issues with our own names when we communicated with non-Japanese speakers, and we did not want to cause him the same kind of trouble. His name consists of two Chinese characters; the first one means “bright crystal” and the second one means “person”. We wished he would be a pure-hearted person and have a bright life with this name. Incidentally, the number eight is considered to be a lucky number in my country. These reasons were enough to persuade my careful personality. As we expected, now we live abroad in the U.S. His name is not common here, but everyone around him remembers it and calls it with perfect pronunciation. The best thing for me is that he loves his own name.

The naming experience was a weighty mission for us. However, looking back, the time that we thought deeply and agonized over it was valuable, irreplaceable, and filled with lots of love. Though my parents did not consider my naming in the same way, I am grateful to them in the sense that they made me aware of the importance of naming.

Now my son is in elementary school. Is he going to take home an assignment about the origin of his name in the not-so-distant future? No worries, I’m ready. I will be happy to tell him about our first gift, as well as his grandparents’ quirky naming story. ♦

Words of Gratitude for My Spiritual Mentor - Rosy

By Angela Maria from Columbia

Rosy, it's that simple. Short, easy, profound and smart. Beyond my Mother, Rosy was the most important spiritual advisor who brought me close to God. A person who gave everything for me to find my place in life. She marked my life by teaching me that we all come into this world to be Saints where God places us and uses us. Holiness is not a matter of Perfect people. You and I can also achieve it. *"Being Saints is our goal, our goal from where we stand."*

We are all aware that every day we live is a great risk. With God's presence all is possible. As such, Rosy repeated that no one said it would be easy. And yet, not impossible. Everyone passes through all kinds of spiritual, emotional, physical, and economic life situations all the while convinced that these experiences are made to help us grow and to see when life gives one a beautiful day.

I was born and grew up in a Catholic home. Later Rosy pushed me to continue having the correct ideological foundation in my Catholic religion. Conscious of following the path set by the examples that always existed in my home, Rosy continued to take me by the hand and serve as my guide even when I moved to another city.

Rosy, like me, was born in a Catholic home. She was a beautiful woman inside and out. She spoke three languages, played many musical instruments -- especially the piano -- and was a sweet woman. Her father was a government diplomat assigned to a post in England. While living there Rosy realized where she wanted to dedicate her life after discovering Opus Dei. Upon completion of her education in England, her father asked her what she wished to do with her studies. She replied that she wished to serve God and follow the path of religion within the Prelate. Although her father did not understand, he respected her wish and eventually Rosy became the first woman member of Opus Dei in Colombia, thereby opening the doors for future women to follow.

One of my most beautiful memories of Rosy is when doctors discovered cancer in her that had metastasized. After receiving lengthy chemotherapy with no result and her casket having been ordered, we all waited for her death. Suddenly, one day she sat up in her recliner saying, "I feel good!" Completely recovered by the grace of God at the age of 58. Rosy went on to live 38 more years being able to bring many more souls to the feet of the Lord.

My dear Rosy, I always express myself about you in the present because despite the fact that you are no longer present in body, you are here with me day-by-day with all that legacy of love, wisdom,

prudence and generosity that you taught me. I will always feel fortunate and have no way to thank God for having placed you in my path. When I left my Father's house so young to live in another city, you took it upon yourself to continue enriching my spiritual life and filling me with reason to continue forward to Jesus! Rosy, thank you very much and now I only have to honor you with all that legacy you taught me by putting it into practice. For example, what it is like to be in the shoes of another.

I close my story with thoughts: "ultimately, along the way we meet different people, some stay, others leave... but they all teach us something no matter how good or bad it may be. Some teach us to know each other, to identify what we want in life, to forgive and ask for forgiveness. However, there is a type of person who is distinguished from them all. Those people who teach you your value, those people who teach you to love and let yourself be loved just as you are. They are better known as friends, brothers." Rosy, you are my true friend, brother that God in his infinite love wanted to give me.

What a blessing it was to know you and live by your side!

Forever your disciple, Angela Maria. I love you, Rosy. ♦

Is your Life on the Table?

By Rafaela from Brazil

Changes, even those that are very planned and desired, can have unplanned consequences. Some changes can turn you into a different person, and this was my case.

Ever since I got the good news that we could move abroad, I was really excited to move from Brazil to Nashville. Even though I knew I was going to leave the house that my husband and I recently renovated and thought about all the decorating details, no negative thoughts, or bad feelings about it all occurred to me. Yeah, until moving day!

Anyway, the day had come to start organizing everything for the move: packing, luggage, and putting the objects that would be donated or sold in boxes. However, we had many types of things, including different types of glasses, plates, and decorations. I didn't know where to start or how I could choose what I wanted to take to fit in 2 suitcases. So, I decided to organize using this method, putting on the table everything I really wanted to take with me and putting in boxes what I would donate, keep, or sell.

After having separated almost everything, I decided to rest. Looking at my living room, I saw on one side a lot of full boxes and, on the other side, an almost empty table. At this moment, I realized that I was leaving almost everything, so I thought: "my home and life are on the table". I didn't just feel like I was leaving my stuff, I felt like I was leaving the place where I built my home.

We moved to Nashville. After a few weeks, I was already incredibly fascinated with the city and how friendly the people were. Moreover, I was curious about how easily I adapted to my new home, even having left so many things in Brazil.

One day, talking to a friend about my home in Brazil, trying to describe my apartment, I said: "There, in my apartment". At the time, I thought it was weird naming my old house that way. I mentioned it because normally I would say, "There, at home." I thought maybe I said that because I found my new home here in Nashville. However, I was wrong about that.

Later, there I was again sitting on the couch. Looking at my living room, I saw on the one side my husband, and on the other side myself-- incredibly happy and accomplished. At that moment, I finally understood that I hadn't found a new home in Nashville, because my home never left me. I realized that I hadn't found a new home because home exists where we feel at home.

I found out that no matter where my house is located or if there are multiple sets of crystal wine glasses in the house, or if there is no cup, my home is where my husband and I are together.

I'm glad I realized that my life is not "on the table", and that my life and home will always be where I am. I am becoming a better version of myself. Well, after having at least two glasses of wine.

Anyway, I understood at the end of the day that sometimes we give a lot of value- and more than we should--to an object or place. Also, I learned that sometimes we start to live as if our lives could reside in objects or things --as if we could leave our lives "on the table"-- when in fact our life and our happiness will always be with us, wherever we are.

How about you? Is your life on the table-- or wherever you are? ♦

Belmont ESL Faculty 2022-2023



Dick Bowers has been teaching Level 5 ESL at Belmont for ten years. He is a retired U.S. Foreign Service Officer who travelled and worked around the world for 30 years in the U.S. Embassies in Panama, Poland, Singapore, West Germany and Bolivia. He has been to over 100 countries, thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail and walked or climbed to the highest point of each state in the U.S. He has a passion for languages and has studied Spanish, Russian, German, Polish, Portuguese and Chinese. He also studied Latin, but he has yet to find any native speakers.



Jane DuBose has been teaching ESL at Belmont for five years. She spent her career as a writer, editor, consultant, and trainer, most recently focused on the business of healthcare. She also worked as a reporter and editor at newspapers. She loves reading and is part of two book groups (one for more than 35 years). Jane also enjoys playing the ukulele with her ukulele group and is learning to play the mandolin. On weekends, she is on the hiking trail with her husband or possibly one of her two adult children.



Mary Jane Duke is from Montgomery, Alabama and received her Master of Education degree from Peabody College for Teachers. She has been teaching ESL since 1997. She is married and has two daughters and four grandchildren. She enjoys reading, flower arranging and giving parties. She especially enjoys creating ways to teach English!



Mary Kaye Jordan discovered her love of teaching over 25 years ago when she began teaching in Belmont's ESL program. Over the years she has made friends from all over the world, and it has made her life richer. Mary Kaye has 2 sons, 2 grandchildren, and expects twin grandbabies to join the family soon. She loves hearing from old students and looks forward to staying in touch with you.



Sally Tiven is a journalist turned songwriter turned ESL teacher who explains, “I had the good fortune to meet Frank Jones, a former ESL teacher, who is the inspiration for many of us who have participated in ESL at Belmont UMC. The rest is history.”



Joyce Eyler has been a volunteer in Belmont’s ESL program for 10 years and considers it a privilege to be a helper to our diverse student body.

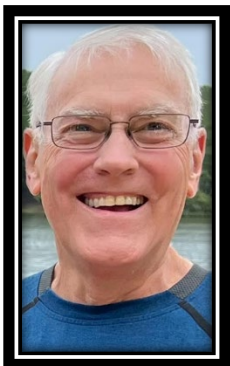
ESL Substitute Teachers and Volunteers



Susan Kirby comes from Philadelphia, PA, but moved to Nashville after college, where she met and married her husband, Bill. They will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this summer. She has four children and three grandchildren. Susan is very active in many programs in the church including prison ministry, Room in the Inn for the homeless community, older adult ministries, choir and handbells.



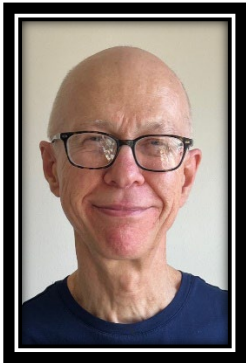
Patsy Lanigan spent her career as a public school foreign language teacher. When she retired from Metro Schools, Patsy continued working part time and as an adjunct. Since finally leaving the classroom, she has enjoyed being able to help Mary Jane with the ESL class.



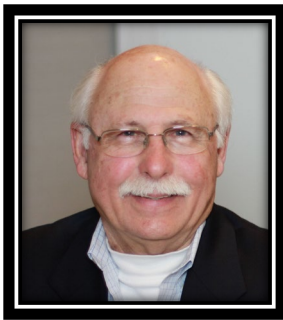
David Jarvis is a retired physician. After graduating from the University of Louisville Medical School, he trained at Vanderbilt in Internal Medicine and Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine and has spent his life caring for others. He enjoys spending time with his wife Tandy and with his family. David also enjoys traveling, reading, and hiking.



Tandy Jarvis retired from a career as both a social worker and teacher. She worked in child welfare, did medical social work, and later taught Sociology at Belmont University. Tandy (along with David) has three sons and five granddaughters. She enjoys traveling, reading, Pilates, and spending time with family and friends.



Steve Stroud grew up in Melbourne, Florida. He enjoys being with people. He worked as a nurse's aide helping older persons. He values growing in the Christian faith. He enjoys music, reading, and walking. He is married to Betty-for 39 1/2 years.

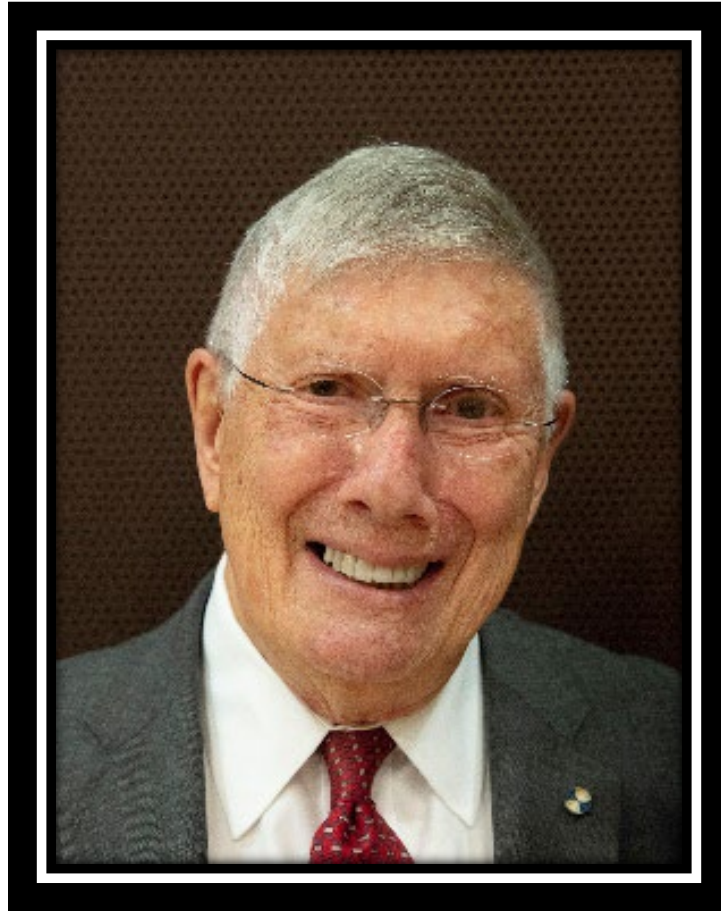


Charles Hewgley has been involved with the Belmont ESL program in various capacities for 16 years. He also taught 3 years with the Metro Schools Community Education ESL program. He retired from a career with Tennessee State government and from the public sector in healthcare management. He retired from the U.S. Naval Reserve after 27 years of service.

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Frank Emerson Jones, III

June 10, 1934 - August 24, 2020



Frank Jones was a retired orthopedic surgeon who, following retirement after 31 years from his medical practice, went back to school and received a Master of Education degree in English as a Second Language Instruction. He taught the most advanced level of ESL for 22 years at Belmont UMC. Language was his passion and he loved teaching. His students understood that being in his class was akin to studying English at the college level. They worked very hard in “Dr. Frank’s” class. His contribution to the history of Belmont ESL is a strong memory. Dr. Frank Emerson Jones, III passed away on August 24, 2020. He was 86.

Belmont UMC ESL Ministry Thriving After More Than 50 Years

The ESL program at Belmont UMC began in the spring of 1969 through some individuals connected with the Vanderbilt Medical School Faculty Auxiliary and a local Presbyterian missionary on leave from a South American post. The first sessions were described by some more as acculturation gatherings for foreign, visiting medical faculty wives. Meetings were held at a house in the neighborhood that Vanderbilt owned which was not far from the church. Sometime during that first year, Vanderbilt had other plans for the house and the program searched for another place to hold meetings. Seeking a new meeting location, a connection was made with Belmont UMC.

As the ESL program joined the growing numbers of community programs and activities meeting on the BUMC campus, more Belmont members volunteered to assist with and teach in the ESL program. The program began to transition more into a classroom setting concentrating on structured language training and American history and culture. It continues as that today.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the ESL program conducted both day and evening classes. Only day classes are offered presently. A number of students finding their way to Belmont ESL are affiliated with Vanderbilt and other local universities as students, faculty, staff or spouse. We find that the program's reputation and history is shared in some other countries among the communities that feed Nashville's academic pipeline. Often, we learn a new student has arrived here with advice to find "that church in the Village where they teach English." Even though Vanderbilt has an internal program offering English lessons for students, faculty and staff, they continue to be a frequent referral source to Belmont's program.

Historically, many of the ESL program teachers and volunteers are Belmont members. Some of the teachers are not Belmont members. At least five of the current teachers have been working with this program continuously for more than 20 years--not all are BUMC members.

During the COVID years, ESL classes were reduced in size and met online only. For this school year, students are returning to in-person classes, although the numbers of students are much fewer than before 2020. We at Belmont UMC are proud of the history and accomplishments of Belmont ESL. This church has always been a generous provider of space and support for many community activities. We want to share the success and contribution that teaching English to our neighbors has meant to our community.



Frank Jones (r) began the tradition of the “Turkey Trot” at the beginning of every annual Belmont ESL School-wide International Thanksgiving celebration luncheon. This tradition continues.



This is a photo of the last class that Frank Jones taught in March, 2020, shortly before his death.



Belmont ESL 2022-2023