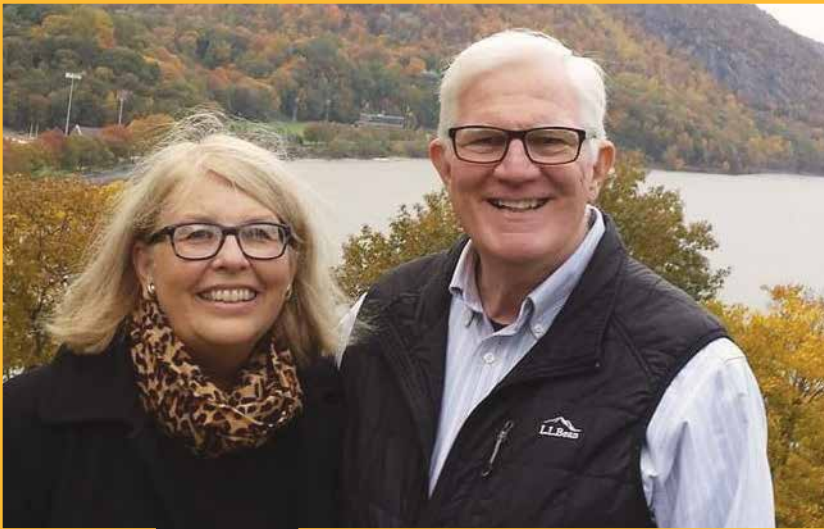


The Language of a Gospel Partnership



Jim and Susan Austin

have long served SBC of Virginia churches by leading **English as a Second Language (ESL)** trainings across the Commonwealth. Recently, Jim and Susan sat down to answer a few questions about their passion for this ministry and how God has led and continues to lead them to serve churches and the nations who call Virginia home.

Q When did you first get involved in ESL ministry?

Some 20 years ago, we lived and worked in Kaiserslautern, Germany. We attended Faith Baptist Church, where Susan

participated in a Basic ESL Workshop shortly before we returned to Virginia. This is where Susan first sensed God's call to share her faith through teaching ESL. However, that call found no outlet for a decade. Just over 10 years ago, Jim needed to take a college course for his work. The only course that would fit his schedule was Methods and Techniques of Teaching ESL, taught by Katherine Burns, a former IMB missionary. We took the course together. When Mrs. Burns learned that we were interested in ESL as a ministry, she took us aside and told us that she would equip us to teach ESL in a local church, a restaurant, or even a grass hut...and she did. She even invited us to attend the ESL training she provided for the new missionaries at the International Learning Center. Now both of us understood that God had a mission for us to take the Gospel to the nations through an ESL ministry.

*We attended a Basic ESL Workshop at **Red Lane Baptist Church** (Powhatan) and started an ESL ministry at our home church, **Kingsland Baptist Church** (North Chesterfield). About this same time, the SBCV saw the possibilities of reaching the nations that were living in our state and asked us to become facilitators for other churches wanting to start an ESL ministry. We received training at the National Literacy*

ESL

English as a Second Language

Missions Workshop and began teaching the Basic ESL Workshop in churches across Virginia.

We have led over 60 Basic ESL workshops in Virginia, as well as New York, Massachusetts, and Lithuania. We have led an ESL ministry at Kingsland Baptist and have taught English intensives in churches and camps in Lithuania, Germany, and Serbia, as well as online in Iraq and Brazil.

Q What qualifications or certifications do you hold in ESL?

We are both certified as Basic ESL Workshop leaders by Send Relief (NAMB). Additionally, Susan is a national trainer with Send Relief. She conducts National Literacy Workshops to train new state workshop leaders and provides updates to state trainers with the most current techniques. That being said, the minimum requirements for anyone to teach in an ESL ministry are to speak English and be a follower of Jesus Christ. We believe one should also have a certain sense that teaching English is the way God is calling them to advance His Kingdom on earth.

Q Why do you believe ESL is an essential ministry at this time for churches in Virginia?

People from across the globe are making their new homes near SBCV churches. These internationals add a new dimension to our neighborhoods...and new opportunities for our churches to share the Gospel. New immigrants often need help settling into their new life. SBCV churches extend the love of Jesus to their neighbors, whatever the need might be. If they are cold, we give

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Odilon's Story

The story of Odilon is an example of how God can use an ESL ministry to reach the nations in America for Christ.

Kingsland Baptist Church in Richmond planted a Hispanic church, **Iglesia Bautista Nuevo Esperanza** and, at the same time, started a new ESL class. Many members of Nuevo Esperanza attended the new ESL class, including the pastor at the time, Fernando Mangieri. The class had been advertised throughout the community, so there were also students from outside the church. Friendships naturally developed between the students. The students from Nuevo Esperanza invited other students to visit their church, and many did.

Odilon began attending Nuevo Esperanza. There he heard the Word of God taught in a way he had never heard before. Odilon said later that he never knew that a personal relationship with God was possible. He received Christ, and his life was transformed in very evident ways. "It's personal now," Odilon said, "and I've never been so happy! Now I must tell everyone about Jesus!"

Odilon started going out in his community every Saturday morning, knocking on doors, telling people about Jesus, and inviting them to Nuevo Esperanza. He also invited them to his ESL class. He knew they might be afraid to attend his church but, because of their language need, they might be willing to come to ESL. And Odilon knew that good things can happen when you attend an ESL class!

Nuevo Esperanza began planting another church to reach the 2,000 Mixtec people in the Richmond area. The Mixtecs are a close-knit group from Mexico with a unique language. Do you know who is a Mixtec? Yes, Odilon! Odilon led the outreach to the Mixtec people, sharing the Gospel and leading Bible studies in his native language. From unsaved ESL student to pastor of the Mixtecs in less than four years—only God can do that! Sadly, Odilon passed away in May of 2021, but his ministry continues through the lives he touched.



The Language of a Gospel Partnership

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them a coat; if they are hungry, we give them food; and if they are unable to communicate, we give them English. Many immigrants speak little English and need to learn the language quickly just to survive. We may not have a coat to give or food to give, but we all have English. And your international neighbors will very much appreciate if you share it with them. In the process of teaching English, we intentionally share the Gospel with our students and connect them with believers who speak their heart language.

Many SBCV churches take the Gospel to nations around the world through short-term missions. English is the most desired and valuable language in the world. World citizens are eager to engage with English speakers, particularly Americans. Churches (especially those that go to the same place year after year) create friendships around learning English, sometimes extended through social media. This often provides the opportunity to share their faith. Local pastors and church leaders are happy to help SBCV churches organize English classes. The connections made in these classes are often with people the local church would otherwise not know about. ■



REACHing THE WORLD at Home

A first step to reaching the world in our communities (internationals who have come to the US) is to host or attend an English as a Second Language (ESL) Basic Training Workshop. These workshops are designed to equip your church to demonstrate the love of Christ, meet a need, and ultimately share the Gospel with internationals by helping them learn or improve their English skills.

An ESL workshop is usually held over two days and results in teacher certification through the North American Mission Board.

Topics covered at the 12-hour interactive workshop include:

- Organizing an ESL ministry
- Understanding a student's English fluency and placement interview
- Planning lessons
- Introducing vocabulary
- Teaching pronunciation
- Dealing with cultural misunderstandings
- Incorporating biblical material into class sessions
- Sharing the Gospel with students
- Recommended resources

Interested?



To find out more or to schedule a workshop, visit: sbcv.org/esl