

## Better English on Sixth Report

### 2019 Better English on Sixth Report

Better English on Sixth began its fifth year in September, continuing to offer free English learning assistance for international adults and children of the Tacoma area. Our typical Monday night begins at 6:50 when we start in classrooms, followed by a snack break at 7:30, and then more class and individual assistance until 8:30. Attendance ranged from 25 to 35 internationals this fall, down about a dozen from autumn of 2018.

Better English on Sixth began a new initiative this year to coordinate publicity with similar ESL programs in Tacoma. "Better English" is now included in the title of five programs, including those at Tacoma Nazarene (Better English on 38<sup>th</sup>), Talk Time and BE at the Station (Sunset Bible Church), and BE on 104<sup>th</sup>, (Resurrection Presbyterian). In September Better English completed two more training sessions in DeSoto Hall, and enjoyed the participation of new Faith Presbyterian recruits, as well as new volunteers from Sunset Bible and Resurrection Presbyterian. It has been fruitful for the program to be able to offer a variety of program times and styles.

Our philosophy of ministry is based on serving their need for English, building friendships, and pursuing spiritual conversations as we gain trust and show love. Our particular strength is a very high volunteer to student ratio, often nearly 1:1, so the fun of learning is enhanced by friendship and personal attention to individual needs. Many friendships continue outside of Monday nights.

We have been able to help individuals work on a resume, hunt for jobs, and practice interview skills; the deacons have been active with some of our constituents.

There are several collateral benefits from Better English on Sixth. One is the intergenerational and joyful fellowship of the church partners, who, in working shoulder to shoulder, grow closer to each other and appreciate God's gifts to them as found in their brothers and sisters. Another collateral benefit is church members discovering gifts and talents in themselves in the exercise of them. A third benefit is the broadening of our view of the universal Church in Tacoma and overcoming stereotypes while learning more about the world.

The ministry faces several challenges and appreciates the ongoing prayer support by the congregation. Retaining students who, as a group, are naturally quite transient and busy, is difficult. We are especially eager to have as good a retention rate as possible since the ministry intends to leverage relationships. To best build these relationships, we need a 1:1 partner to student ratio, for which we need, and are often blessed with, a large and consistent participation of church partners.

Jonathan Nichols