

Alpha Annual Report

(for year ending 30 September 2009)

Area of Responsibility

Alpha and After Alpha

Alpha is an introduction to the Christian faith. The course runs over 11 weeks – Thursday evenings from 7 to 9.30 – starts with drinks and a delicious meal (thanks to a talented and dedicated catering team) followed by a talk (a mix of live speakers – this year Dave Richards, George Craig and Bruce Foley - and DVD of Nicky Gumbel, Vicar of HTB in Knightsbridge, the driving force behind Alpha) and then discussion in small groups led by a squad of committed, thoughtful and imaginative leaders and helpers. The course includes a day or weekend away where the focus is on the Holy Spirit. This year James Torrance was the guest speaker on the Weekend Away to Ardeonaig by Loch Tay on the winter course and Dave Richards led the Day Event on the spring course; *After Alpha* courses are offered as a follow on for people who have made commitments or grown in their faith on Alpha or who just want to learn more. This year, three After Alpha groups ran in the spring and summer.

Summary of preceding year

We were very fortunate in having fabulous leadership and catering teams for both Alpha courses. Some leaders had to stand down after the winter course because of other commitments but we were able to replenish the teams with others, thus building up an ever larger pool of experienced Alpha leaders. Super teams also led the After Alpha courses. So this is an area of ministry with no shortage of leadership talent. We were also greatly encouraged by the numbers starting and sticking with both Alpha courses – more than 50 in total. The church family has heard a cross section of what Alpha has meant and is meaning to people in the interviews as part of the build up to the 2009-10 season. It is wonderful to see people who have come to faith or have recommitted through Alpha and then going on to play their part in the wider life of the church family serving in a variety of areas.

Does the church family as a whole value and support Alpha as much as we should given that it is one of our main means of evangelistic outreach? Alpha leaders are delighted by the efforts that some have made and are making to get their friends and contacts along to a low key, relaxed event which, given national and international publicity, has street cred and helps many on their spiritual journey. It takes courage to invite someone to Alpha and it's great that some have done it. But what if we all introduced one friend a year to Alpha? Then we would need to call on all our leadership resources and might struggle to cope, but that's a challenge we would love to have.

Targets for the coming year

We plan to run Alpha twice in 2009-10. We are off to a great start with over 70, including team, at the first night of the winter course. We again have a great team with real strength in depth and a super group of guests. Our target is that the numbers would be up on last year – so far so good. All the leaders have prayer partners and our prayer is that even more in the church would get behind Alpha in prayer and in actively promoting Alpha among their friends and acquaintances

Resource Implications for the coming year

It costs £50 for each guest on the Alpha course, including food, courses, materials etc. In addition there are some costs for publicity and travel and accommodation for the weekend away speakers. All guests on the course are invited, irrespective of means, to attend the weekend away and in the past generous donations have enabled us to subsidise those guests who are unable to meet the cost. A donation last year allowed us to give every guest their own copy of one of the gospels during the week on "Why and how should I read the Bible?" God has graciously provided for Alpha in every way over the last year and given us everything we need to support the increasing number of guests. ***The biggest resource request looking ahead is for every member of the church family to commit to pray now for the guest they will invite along to the next course.***