



Why are we running Alpha in a Catholic context?

In his 2013 teaching document *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Pope Francis stressed "the fundamental role of the first announcement or *kerygma*, which needs to be the centre of all evangelising activity and all efforts at Church renewal" (para 164).

ALPHA is a well-established tool, used successfully by Catholic parishes across the world (as well as by Christians of all denominations and none) for doing exactly what Pope Francis is advocating – introducing people to the person of Jesus Christ and helping them develop a personal relationship with him through the power of the Holy Spirit in the midst of his Church. It is based on welcome and hospitality, sharing and prayer. Each session includes a meal, a talk and small group discussion, where no question is too simple and no answer pre-packaged. It provides the spark and springboard for further exploration of the riches and depths of the Catholic faith to suit each individual's needs. For the talks, we will be using the most recent, highly-acclaimed Alpha Film Series.

Who will be invited to participate in our Alpha Course?

- As many parishioners as possible who have not yet done *Alpha*, from all six of our churches
- Parishioners' family members, friends and colleagues who are on the fringes of our community or not practising Christians at all
- Anyone who is curious

Why are existing parishioners encouraged to come?

1. To renew and re-energise our own faith communities by revisiting together the central Christian proclamation of Jesus Christ, "which we must hear again and again in different ways, ...at every level and moment" (*Pope Francis, see above*)
2. To explore how we might be more open to a (deeper) personal relationship with Jesus in the midst of his Church, and what this means
3. To help us feel more confident in sharing our faith with others
4. To encourage us to invite (and perhaps accompany) others who are not Christians to this course, and also to future Alpha Courses as we will be able to speak from positive personal experience

Our Experience:

We ran our first Pastoral Area Alpha Course in 2017 and had large numbers attending from a variety of backgrounds. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive – here are just a few quotes:

"I was feeling lost and have found the course has helped me feel considerably more positive and has also helped me to understand more about the bible and in particular the Holy Spirit. I know I have a long way to go and I need to make more time for bible reading and prayer."
(*non church-goer*)

"The Alpha Course has changed my direction in life. It has given me a purpose. I am now attending church regularly every Sunday... I have felt much love and care which has helped restore my faith in God, in this world and in mankind. I would definitely recommend Alpha."
(*occasional church-goer*)

"The Alpha Course has given me the confidence to be more open with friends and family about my faith" (*regular church-goer*)

"What a joy to meet so many like-minded people all on a journey, searching for something more meaningful in life. Alpha takes you along that journey as you learn about people's experiences in what it's like to become a Christian and having a relationship with Jesus. You witness the amazing power of the Holy Spirit and how it changes lives. Thank you Alpha for changing mine."
(*regular church-goer*)