

Alpha South Carolina

February 2018 Newsletter

Volume 1

Issue 2

Alpha

Personal Note...

Welcome to the February edition of the Alpha South Carolina Newsletter! I am excited to announce our recently updated website. Please take a look! www.alphasc.org

Quite a few churches started their Alpha Courses in January, including 15 who launched their first course! It is such a joy to see the growth of South Carolina churches offering Alpha. The more churches that run Alpha, the more guests who will be transformed and come into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I recently returned from the Alpha USA National Conference which was held in the Phoenix area at the Hillsong Mesa campus. What an incredible time! The theme of the conference was Cultivating Kingdom Culture. The event kicked off with worship by the Hillsong Mesa worship team and it was a powerful way to start the conference. We also had a special treat to hear Matt Maher and his band as we were privileged to be the start of their nationwide tour. Matt is well known for the songs "Lord I need you" and "Your grace is enough". Matt also shared the story of his faith journey with us. The speakers were incredible, including Eleanor Mumford, leader of the Vineyard Movement in the UK, who shared her testimony of healing and led us in a time of calling on the Holy Spirit. Pastors from many incredible churches also shared their insights on outreach and Kingdom culture – including Jeanne Stevens of Soul City Church in the Chicago area, Dave Gibbons of New Song Church in inner city LA and John Mark Comer of Bridgetown Church in Portland. We also heard from Bishop Eduardo Navares of the Diocese of Phoenix and we had a chance to pray for the reconciliation of Catholics and Protestants.

Next year's conference has been announced to be January 31-February 1, back at Hillsong Church. You can already register at: alphausa.org – click on the conference tab. Whether you are a pastor, an Alpha leader or practitioner or simply interested in evangelism and outreach, please consider attending. Maybe combine the trip with a little sightseeing in the area!

In other news, I hope you enjoy reading comments from one of our Alpha partners, and those from one of our partner churches. And please continue to pray for us.



[Click here for conference highlights](#)

Partner Profile...

Introducing Linda J.



How did you first hear about Alpha or get involved with Alpha?

I first heard of Alpha in the 1990s when we were living in Singapore. We were not regular church goers but had started going on occasion (think Christmas, Easter, other) to a church there that was running Alpha. One of my colleagues at work suggested that my husband and I might enjoy the course and it took us awhile to actually decide to go but we finally made it there in 1998.

How has Alpha impacted you personally?

While we would have called ourselves Christians before attending Alpha, our faith did not play a major role in our lives. The experience of Alpha led to an amazing change in our lives, it was like a light bulb coming on for the first time. We began a journey that still continues of learning more and more about living as a Christian and seeking God's daily presence in our lives.

What prompted you to start supporting Alpha financially or in other ways?

After attending Alpha, we became helpers on a course and when we returned to the US, helped start Alpha at our church, a senior center and even went on a Global Alpha training in Russia. We continued to see the impact Alpha could have on a person's life and were very interested in supporting Alpha however possible with our time and finances with the goal of helping others have this life changing experience.

Having experienced Alpha from both sides of the table, what would be your personal advice to a church considering running Alpha? And what would be your advice to someone who is considering taking an Alpha course?

My advice to a church considering running Alpha would be to encourage moving forward with the course as a great evangelism tool. I would also advise them to get the whole church involved in supporting Alpha and to stick with it over time as it is not a one and done program. If someone is considering taking Alpha, I would say go for it, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Featured Church...

Renovation Vineyard Church, Longs, SC

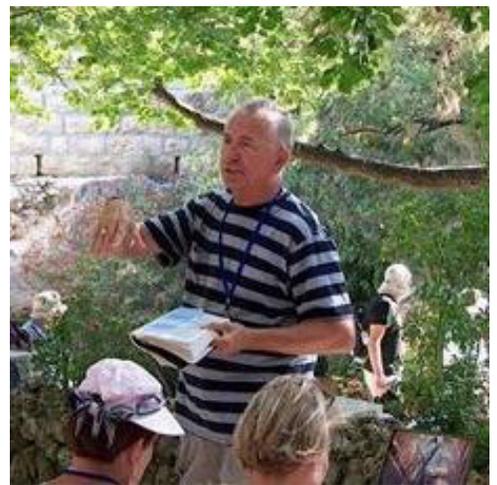
Pastor George Wilson

First encounter with ALPHA

I first read about ALPHA in Canada in a Christian publication in the late 90's (1990's, not 1890's). To a lifelong Presbyterian it sounded very interesting, but a little out there. I was intrigued, but not enough to dig deeper. Then around 2003 or 2004 I attended an ALPHA Conference in Washington, DC and was introduced to the ALPHA Course, Nicky Gumbel, and the entire ALPHA principles and practicalities. I was smitten. I took this back to our Presbyterian church and began running ALPHA in 2005.

Church plant with ALPHA

Having worked in ministry for over twenty-five years, and having 10 ALPHA Courses under my belt, as did most of our church plant team, we were led to use ALPHA as our training tool, vision tool and discipleship/evangelism tool. From the principles and practicalities, to running small groups, pastoral care and prayer ministry . . . everything was in line with the vision and mission that I had been given when we were called to plant a new, contemporary, non-denominational church. It was an ideal fit!



Everyone on the leadership team took ALPHA and was greatly impacted by it. Since that time, we require anyone who wants to serve at Renovation Vineyard Church to participate in ALPHA in some way. We employ ALL of the practicalities that Nicky Gumbal mentions in the trainings, including the way we greet and interact with people, and choosing music we that it is relatable to our guests. We have found that most of the people who come through ALPHA grew up with some church background, but often left the church because of a negative experience. Our worship team does a great job of taking old hymns and recreating them with a new beat and style. We don't expect or assume that people walk in knowing church-familiar terms, and even if they do, we want to help shine a fresh light on them.

Knowing that 78% of the people between Charleston and Wilmington do NOT attend church, we have firmly redoubled our efforts with ALPHA.

Utilization of other ALPHA resources

We run ALPHA three times a year at RVC, in prison twice a year, and in a local shelter as often as we can (their turnover requires us to adapt). We also run Youth ALPHA once a year. ***One of our Board member, who is also on our Worship Team, has run ALPHA using Facebook Live and had over 100 regular views.*** We have used the ALPHA follow-on small group studies and plan to start one in the next couple of weeks.

Additionally, we have used The ALPHA Marriage course, and the Pre-Marriage Course for premarital counseling, and we have used The ALPHA Parenting for Children and Teens. Our plan is to get into Assisted Living facilities in the area to run ALPHA there. I have had inquires about running ALPHA in neighborhoods as a way to get folks in their neighborhood together in fellowship and at the same time discuss "What Is the Meaning of Life?". We introduced ALPHA to missionaries in Costa Rica and they run it on a consistent basis and find it a life-changing tool for addicts and others far from God in their community.

We have a display of the ALPHA-recommended readings available in the worship center at all times and people regularly purchase a book and either read it or take it to someone who needs to read it. Some who are local even come to the next ALPHA.

Advice to a church considering ALPHA

First, I would want to know if they are serious about doing church in a different way than we've always done church in the past. What are they really willing to change in order to reach people who are not being reached by our great traditional churches now... [They should ask themselves] Do we just talk about the lost and those far from God, or do we really love them? "How uncomfortable am I willing to be to save one lost soul?" If they are really willing to do church in a new way and reach outside the box, I would strongly encourage them to take a hard look at ALPHA.

Do not run ALPHA until you have experienced ALPHA. Attend an ALPHA Course running near you. One evening, two evenings, the entire course – and DON'T miss the entire weekend away. If you are thinking of running ALPHA, you are more than welcome to attend our course at Renovation Vineyard Church or any of the churches in our area. And do the entire training EVERY TIME you run ALPHA. It is so important. Those who are new need to be trained and those who have been trained before five times still need the refreshers. I ALWAYS learn something new and I have been involved in 56 ALPHAS!

Pray, pray, pray! Don't think about starting ALPHA unless you and your team have spent considerable time (not hours, but weeks or months) praying about every aspect. The Holy Spirit will honor your prayers.

Personally

I hope you can see that I am excited and on fire for ALPHA. It is through ALPHA that I have learned to really trust the Holy Spirit for ALL things. I have learned to allow Him to work in His time and not worry about my timing, as long as I have first listened to His leading. I have been trained in three or four different modes of evangelism and had some degree of "success" in reaching people for our Lord, but once I began running ALPHA and allowed the Holy Spirit full reign, we have seen life after life, all ages, all religious backgrounds, all ethnic and economic levels, even hardened criminals, come to the Lord in a broken, slobery, snotty mess as they finally turn their lives over to Him and He begins to transform their lives and pour His love into their hearts by His Holy Spirit. THAT is really what the Church is about. God is still healing, still restoring, still drawing, still filling and still loving today in our ALPHA Courses! I am so thankful that I have been able to see and be a small part of what God is doing through ALPHA.

Coming Events

Christian Chamber, February 20, Noon-1 at CSU, North Charleston.

LifeWorks, February 22, 7:30-9 a.m. at Seacoast Church, Mt. Pleasant.
Speaker: Bob Milligan, Founder of Nature's Variety

God in the Workplace, March 15, 7:15-9 a.m. at the Harbour Club, Charleston.
I will be the speaker: Experiencing Alpha. www.godintheworkplace.com

How Can You Help?

PRAY • SERVE • GIVE

Pray:

- You are invited to join our monthly prayer call on the first Monday of each month.
- Our call in number is **(515) 739-1034**, then enter **access code 656709#**

Serve:

- We need volunteers to serve in various avenues of ministry: prisons, training, and technology
- Please contact me if prison ministry is an area in which you feel called to serve. We provide special training for prison volunteers.

Give:

- You can donate to the work of Alpha South Carolina via PayPal: [Click here](#) or by mailing a check made out to Christian Ministries of the Carolinas, with the memo designation: "Alpha South Carolina" to 1928 Davant Circle, Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464.
- 100% of our funding comes from individual donors, churches, and foundations who support our mission of sharing the Gospel through Alpha.

Your gift is tax deductible, and yields eternal rewards!