

ALPHA USA

YEAR IN REVIEW



Alpha

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Thursday, March 12, 2020, will become one of those “do you remember the day when” memories for me and many others in the United States. Do you remember the day when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded just after launch? Do you remember the day when you proposed marriage, or when you said, “yes?” Do you remember when you received the diagnosis? Do you remember when the twin towers went down? Some moments are unforgettable, for better or for worse.

On that Thursday in March, I was with a group of pastors from around the country when the phone calls started coming in from their church teams back home. “The governor is shutting down our gatherings” or “we need to take this health crisis seriously and close our doors until it passes.” Every one of these gifted, talented, experienced, and mature Christian leaders, said in one way or another, “what are we going to do?” Opinions about the shutdowns aside, the global Church faced a crisis unlike any of us had ever seen or known in our lifetime.

So, too, did Alpha. Our mission is to equip and serve the Church in its mission to help people discover and develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. What were we to do? We had fulfilled our mission through an in-person gathering, a shared meal, conversation around a table, and prayer times with a hand on a shoulder. We create a new front door within the Church for people who don’t yet know Jesus Christ. How would we help churches reach people with the gospel of Jesus if they couldn’t gather? How would our ministry model of community and hospitality, of conversation and prayer, of relational evangelism and belonging in a group ever work in this new reality?

We got on our knees in both prayerful desperation and conviction. We must equip the Church to fulfill the Great Commission. We must, like those four friends in Luke 5 who carried the paralytic man on a mat to Jesus, help the Church find another way, start ripping into roofs if we have to, in order to bring people to Jesus.

This wasn’t easy. The Barna Group has stated that churches within the U.S. are down in attendance an average of 20%, many closer to 30% or more, and do not expect to bounce back anytime soon. Church leaders are still struggling under the pressure of reduced budgets, staff layoffs, high anxiety, burnout, and limited margin for anything but the very basics

of shepherding believers in their congregations. Barna reports that most churches are following a broadcast-only approach, doing everything they can just to broadcast their weekly service online. That’s it. Others have pushed into creating small groups for Christians to continue growing. Others have done a tremendous job in serving the needs of the physically poor in their community.

But the evangelism challenge remains. There have been just enough resources and energy broadly for the Church to meet its own needs and the needs of its existing members in 2020. The Church has had to circle the wagons in a season of survival and care for the flock, the ninety-nine. But what about the one? What about the millions of ones who are lost and desperate and struggling and more open to the hope of Jesus Christ than ever before? What about those who won’t show up to an online church service or Christian small group? Where will they go with their questions and doubts and needs for gospel conversation that will transform their life?

Because of you, the generous financial partners of Alpha, because of thousands of courageous pastors, and the excellent teams of Alpha staff and volunteers, we found a way. We carried mats and ripped roofs to bring people to Jesus. We launched Alpha Online, turning the group experience into a digital group experience. We rolled out simple training and tools to churches around the country and within just one week, and throughout the rest of the year, thousands of churches started rolling up their sleeves and leading people to Jesus through Alpha Online.

In fact, in the United States, we were able to provide Alpha for free to more than 8,000 churches and

ministries, running over 14,700 courses, and reaching approximately 574,000 participants in 2020 alone. Based on our findings, we estimate that at least 154,000 people said “yes” to a brand-new relationship with Jesus Christ through these efforts. This is nothing short of a miracle. Only God would take an enormous challenge like 2020 and turn it into such an unexplainable opportunity.

We honestly doubted that it could work. Will non-Christians really show up to a digital Alpha group? Will Christians invite their friends? Will the Holy Spirit break into times of sharing and prayer online? We found out the answer to all these questions is a resounding “yes.” More participants came on each Alpha course than ever before. More Christians invited their non-Christian friends on Alpha. More people stayed through the course from start to finish. And more people revealed a powerful experience of community, the presence of God, and the impact of the gospel. We heard countless comments like these throughout 2020:

“We were blown away with the consistent attendance and immediate transparency in the breakout rooms (small groups). From that single, last-minute online course, six people chose to be baptized. God is moving, even online!” -Westminster Chapel, Bellevue, Wash.

“This is such a terrific opportunity; we learned we can run multiple Alphas at the same time! In 2020, we ran four Alphas—100 people participated and 17 committed their lives to Jesus.” -Mill City Church, Ft. Collins, Col.

“Going to Alpha was one of the best decisions I made in my life, because I learned the truth about who Jesus was.” -Guest, Twin Cities, Minn.

This is the work that you made possible in 2020.

In addition to the impact of the Alpha ministry, as a leader, I’m well aware that we can’t bear good fruit without healthy roots. So, what of the health of the Alpha USA ministry? Thankfully, on page 9, you’ll find a detailed account of some key factors describing the financial and organizational health we’ve been able



to build into Alpha: platinum status from each major charity rating agency, a perfect audit on our financials, a healthy financial position, and most importantly, a flourishing *Best Christian Workplace* certified staff culture. We always say we want to be Alpha on the inside, displaying our values to one another, which leads to healthy fruit and mission achievement.

2020 has not been easy, and 2021 reveals continued challenges for the Church and for effective evangelism. However, together with you, we can and we will press on and press forward to help more people discover and develop a relationship with Jesus.

In awe and filled with gratitude,

Craig Springer



Craig Springer
Executive Director
Alpha USA

2020 GROWTH HIGHLIGHTS



574,600

ALPHA PARTICIPANTS*

**estimated*

2020

2019

TOTAL ALPHA PARTICIPANTS*

2020 **35% GROWTH**

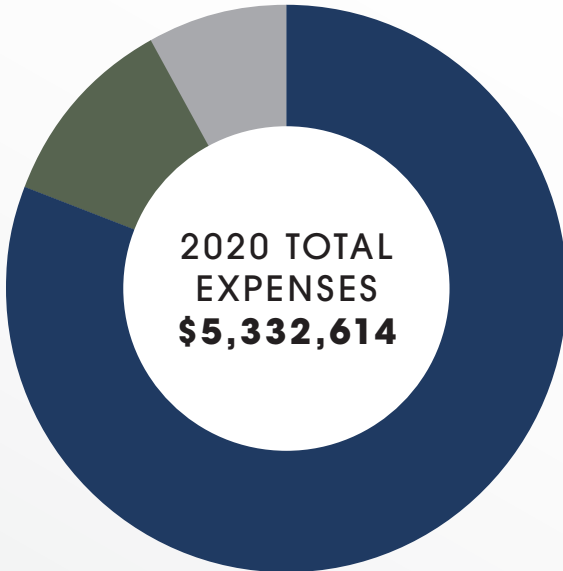
2020

2019

TOTAL CHURCHES & MINISTRIES RUNNING ALPHA*

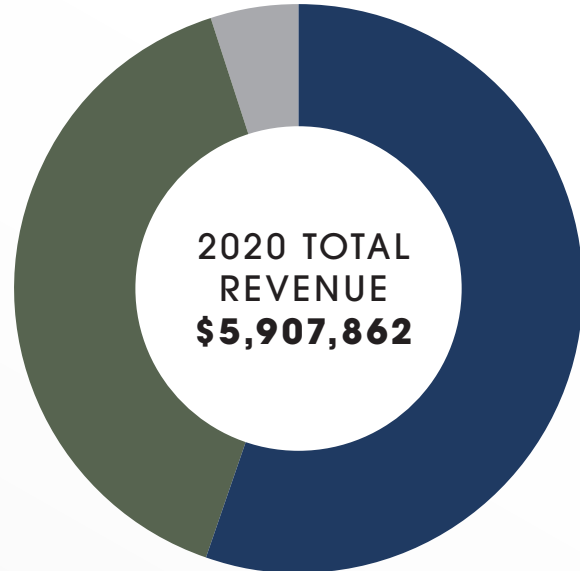
2020 **8% GROWTH**

2020 FINANCIALS



**2020 TOTAL EXPENSES
\$5,332,614**

● Program Services	\$4,319,417
● Fundraising	\$586,588
● General & Admin	\$426,609



**2020 TOTAL REVENUE
\$5,907,862**

● General	\$3,274,713
● Designated	\$2,341,213
● Publishing & Other	\$291,935

*The 2020 revenue reported above does not include income from the Paycheck Protection Program grant we received or the reserves from a merger with the Alpha Houston 501(c)(3). Including these, the income total is **\$6,820,182**. Thanks to God and our generous donors, Alpha USA remains debt-free and retains cash reserves for three months of expenses.*

» For more details, review our most recent auditor report at alphausa.org/financials.



IMPACTING LIVES

In 2020, God multiplied your gifts of time, treasure, and talent at a pace that left us overwhelmed with his goodness. As a result, we estimate that at least **154,000 people** said “yes” to a brand-new relationship with Jesus Christ through these efforts.

TRENDING WITH GEN Z: Three Year Growth

Creating a safe space for teens to have honest conversations about life, faith, and meaning continues to drive growth for the Alpha Youth Series. In 2020, we estimate **more than 127,000** teenagers participated in one of about **3,800 Alpha Youth courses** run in the U.S. **This is a 98% increase from courses run in 2017!**

CONTEXTS

Youth:

The pandemic has created a new avenue for the rising generation to meet Jesus where they already are: screens! God used shutdowns to increase opportunities for teens to experience him in ways they haven't before. This resulted in a massive growth for Alpha Youth—again.

“Through Alpha, we’ve been able to provide an opportunity for young people to lead in the context of gospel conversations...Alpha provides the place for young people to connect with God in a very real way.” -Danny, Central Indiana Youth for Christ

- + **127,808 guests attended Alpha Youth**
- + **3,054 churches and organizations ran Alpha Youth**
- + **3,818 Alpha Youth courses run**

Catholics:

In the earliest days of COVID-19, Alpha Catholic Context created a space online for diocesan leaders—whether already connected to Alpha or not—to share their struggles and be heard.

Parishes united to run diocesan-wide online Alphas, broadening their reach and allowing people to invite friends and family members who lived in other states, and even other countries.

“When you hear someone say, ‘No one can love you more than Jesus,’ that is an incredible thing to hear. Alpha helped me renew my belief in that, and I would invite anyone to experience it for themselves.” -Brian, Chicago, Ill.

- + **168,643 guests attended Alpha (Catholic)**
- + **1,440 parishes ran Alpha**
- + **3,032 Catholic courses run**

Prisons:

Prison ministries nationwide experienced unique roadblocks during the pandemic. Although the majority of prisons and jails in the U.S. closed their doors to volunteers in 2020, the Alpha Prisons team remained active in ministering to chaplains and continued to train facilitators. In the midst of it all, 27 new facilities signed on to offer Alpha!

“Running Alpha Online in a prison was honestly a gift we received through God’s grace and the dedication of prison staff who were willing to make it happen. At our celebration service to close our time together, it was so touching as one inmate shared his testimony and then prayed a simple, honest, humble prayer, thanking God for all that he has done.”

-Alpha USA Staff Member

- + **650 facilities ran Alpha**
- + **650 courses run**
- + **27 new facilities signed on to offer Alpha**



“MY WIFE AND I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN EVANGELIZATION FOR ALMOST 40 YEARS. ALPHA IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND INCLUSIVE PROGRAM WE HAVE EVER SEEN; IT UNIQUELY PRESENTS JESUS ACROSS EVERY BACKGROUND AND EVERY DENOMINATION. IN SUPPORTING ALPHA, WE ARE ANSWERING THE GREAT CALL TO ADVANCE THE KINGDOM.”

-MIKE TIMMIS



ALPHA ONLINE

A virtual mission field for a virtual generation

"I've done a number of Alphas and know the power of the hospitality and relational dynamic. It was tough for me to imagine the (online) format working because of how powerful the circle of community is and how difficult it is to lead through a screen." -Tim McDonald, Westside: A Jesus Church (Portland, Ore.)

When Tim shared his skepticism with us about moving his church's Alpha to the digital space, we understood. Truth be told, we shared his concerns! But as the pandemic began to shut everything down, we knew it was critical to help churches in the U.S., and globally, adapt to offer connection and faith conversations in a trying time.

The Alpha USA team worked nonstop to create and refine a robust toolkit

Because of Your Support:*

- + **2,888 churches and ministries ran Alpha Online in 2020**
- + **45% of the churches that ran Alpha Online were new to Alpha**
- + **188,065 people participated in an Alpha Online in the U.S.**

*ESTIMATED

consisting of videos and digital step-by-step guides for meeting online and running Alpha in this new reality.

What happened astounded all of us. Despite gathering restrictions, God moved. We quickly learned that the Holy Spirit is not hindered by our digital limitations.

Tim reflected on his church's experience, saying,

"It's different for sure, but it is still so powerful, which shouldn't be surprising. This is God's work and it's his Holy Spirit doing the heavy lifting...he never stops working to seek and save those far from himself."

Because of your support and God's provision, hundreds of thousands in the U.S. explored faith online amid incredibly challenging circumstances. By God's Spirit, a whole new mission field is being developed—a virtual mission field, for a virtual generation.

"MY PURPOSE IN LIFE, WHILE I STILL HAVE IT, IS TO TELL EVERYONE I KNOW ABOUT JESUS. HE'S MY REASON FOR LIVING. THANKS TO ALPHA ONLINE I'VE BEEN ABLE TO FULFILL THIS MISSION. I'VE HAD THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INVITE MY FRIENDS AND SHARE MY STORY OF HOPE."

Billy, Alpha Guest

DIGITAL ADOPTION AND EQUIPPING THE CHURCH

Nearly overnight, words we rarely used in everyday life—unprecedented, pivot, Zoom—became part of our daily table talk. Churches of all sizes scrambled to serve guests in a fully digital environment. Organizations worldwide scrapped or overhauled their 2020 strategic plans, finding footing for a short period, only to lose it a day later.

Understanding the need to equip the Church was great, the Alpha USA team found ways to adapt, serve, and equip all leaders throughout the year.

Trainings

Many churches adapting to the online space were new to using such technology for their Sunday services, let alone to offer Alpha in all of its nuances digitally. After launching the Alpha Online materials, the team created a series of live, monthly trainings to coach church leaders and course administrators through hosting an online Alpha. From mid-March through the end of the year, **Alpha staff conducted live webinars to train 3,050 individuals from close to 2,500 churches** on how to run Alpha Online with countless others who could not attend the trainings accessing webinar recordings for guidance.

Virtual Introductions to Alpha

In any given year, we would host in-person events like Experience Alpha, Global Leaders Network (GLEN), and Explore Alpha to introduce church leaders to Alpha and share in ministry times to experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. These events moved online in March, allowing a greater reach than previously possible, with about 600 senior church leaders attending



the virtual events. **In 2020, nearly 45% of the churches who ran a course were new to Alpha.**

Envisioning Donors Digitally

Equipping the Church in the critical cultural moments 2020 served at every turn required an agile organization and supportive donors. The regions aligned quickly to host virtual fundraising events to both celebrate the early success of Alpha Online, and to invite others to invest in this incredible opportunity through their giving. These donors offered strong support as our regions raised the funds necessary to fund our vision.

“These resources gave us what we needed to run Alpha Online, and to streamline our process for moving other groups and ministries into an online context.” Jon Hughes, Adult Ministry Catalyst, Community Christian Church



“JESUS GAVE ME A NEW LIFE.”

God was at work in Max's life even before Max believed there was a God. When Max was going through a difficult time, God sent Joel to pray with him. During that time of prayer, Max experienced an overwhelming sense of God's love.

Later, when Max injured his shoulder just before a powerlifting competition, he prayed—not really knowing who he prayed to—and again felt an overwhelming sense of God's love. In a moment of pure grace and divine intervention, his shoulder was healed and has never bothered him again.

Then Joel invited Max to Alpha. At Alpha, Max found a place where he could ask questions and learn about the love that had been reaching out to him all along. During the Alpha Day Away, he felt the Holy Spirit drawing him in and prayed, “Jesus, you died for me and I want to live for you.”

“Jesus gave me a new life—that's the only way I can put it. I want to spread his love as much as I can.”

» Watch Max share his story on our website at alphausa.org/annualreport.

PRAYER ANCHORS US

"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

-James 5:16 (NIV)

Though no one could have anticipated the storm awaiting us in the year ahead, beginning 2020 with a foundation of prayer created a crucial anchor for Alpha and those we serve. God's timing in preparing us for the challenges ahead was truly perfect.

Through our planned prayer initiatives, and those we couldn't have conceived when we held the first Kingdom Come Prayer event of the year in January and then again in August, God moved time and again. Our greatest honor was to walk alongside those requesting prayer, sit with them in their pain, and see peace on their faces as God ministered to them.

Our commitment to prayer remains steadfast, as we witnessed God's faithfulness throughout the difficult season.

"KINGDOM COME PRAYER STOPS BEING ABOUT ALPHA, AND IT STARTS BEING ABOUT JESUS SAVING OUR BROKEN WORLD. THROUGH THESE GATHERINGS, GOD HAS DEPOSITED IN OUR CHURCH SOMETHING STRONGER THAN THE IMMEDIACY OF WHAT WE SEE. HE HAS GIVEN US HIS HEART!"

BY THE NUMBERS

+ 198 people assembled in a Prayer Response Team nationwide to pray for six weeks at the onset of the global pandemic

+ 1,440 hours covered in dedicated prayer throughout February and October by the global Alpha staff

+ 9,140 people prayed on their own or as part of 200 gatherings nationwide in just two Kingdom Come Prayer events



"BEFORE I FORMED A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, I FELT ON MY OWN."

While others may have viewed him as someone who had his life together, Kyle grappled with multiple losses, dark thoughts, and hopelessness. He assumed he would eventually end his life. Then a friend invited him to attend an Alpha, and "Jesus changed that story," he shared.

"The process you go through in Alpha of opening up to people, exposing some of those darker areas, makes space for change to happen. Alpha helped me process death. I had a number of friends pass away in quick succession, so Alpha was a space where I could address that."

During the weekend getaway, Kyle had a moment of breaking, where he met Jesus in a personal and powerful way. Jesus changed him. Jesus gave him a new perspective on life and hope for the future.

» Watch Kyle share his story on our website at alphausa.org/annualreport.

STUDYING ALPHA'S IMPACT

It's important to us that we don't assume we know what's working; rather, we engage with research to understand how we can best serve churches and share the love of Jesus with the lost. This is why we regularly collaborate with the Barna Group to gather data, determine trends in the Church, and evaluate Alpha's impact.

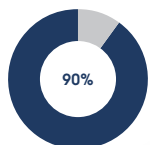
In 2020, Barna surveyed Alpha USA participants giving us some key insights. The study showed that Alpha has a positive impact on nearly every measured outcome, whether held in person or online.

“Regardless of whether meeting in person or online, guests rated their overall Alpha experience as positive, stating it deepened their understanding of faith.”

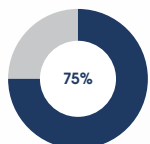
After Alpha, participants are significantly more likely to say: their faith is very important, they know Christians they respect, they understand the basic fundamentals of Christianity, and they are in pursuit of a relationship with God.

With your help, we hope to continue having a positive impact and witness even more lives changed by Jesus through Alpha.

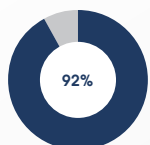
Since participating in Alpha...



Of non-Christians described themselves as Jesus followers



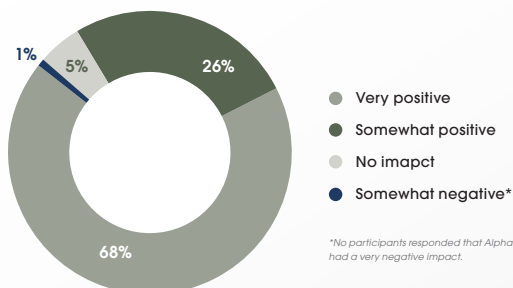
Of Christian, non-active churchgoers became more committed to attending church



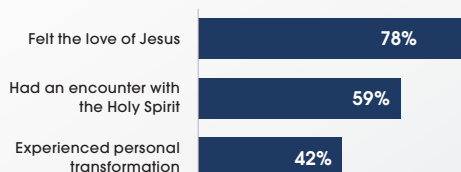
Of Christian, regular churchgoers have a more intimate relationship with Jesus

What impact did Alpha have on your life?

94% of participants said Alpha made a positive impact in their life.



During Alpha, the proportion of guests who...



FROM “JESUS ISN'T FOR ME” TO COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION

As a young Hmong woman with broken family relationships, Melayna found herself angry, alone, and experiencing homelessness. Unsure where to turn, she found a Christian women's shelter willing to take her in. In the home Melayna found a community that showed her the face of Jesus.

This was the start of a transformed life, but Melayna still had questions, so she jumped at the chance to attend Alpha when one of the women in the home extended an invitation.

“Going to Alpha was one of the best decisions I made in my life, because I learned the truth about who Jesus was.” Well acquainted with spirits through Shamanism and witchcraft, Melayna describes how everything changed when she encountered the Holy Spirit at her local Alpha, “There's nothing as loving and comfortable as the Holy Spirit. I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior that day, and I'm never turning back.” Now Melayna radiates God's joy and love. Her broken relationships are being reconciled, she shares Jesus with everyone she can, and everyone she's invited to Alpha has accepted Jesus.



MISSION

Alpha equips and serves the Church in its mission to help people discover and develop a relationship with Jesus.

VISION

The Evangelization of the Nations.
The Revitalization of the Church.
The Transformation of Society.

VALUES

We are passionate about unity.
We are by the Church, for the Church and through the Church.
We believe the Church deserves the best.
We believe in giving it all away.



"WE SUPPORT ALPHA BECAUSE WE TRULY BELIEVE WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO SHARE THE LOVE OF JESUS NOT ONLY LOCALLY BUT THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

ALPHA IS A WONDERFUL MINISTRY THAT SPREADS THE GOSPEL IN A PERSONAL, WELCOMING MANNER AND HAS NO BOUNDARIES. IT'S AN HONOR TO SHARE SOME OF THE BLESSINGS WE HAVE RECEIVED WITH OTHERS TO SEE THEM COME TO THE LORD, GROW, AND HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS."

-Neville Fernandes

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

The magnolia tree has an interesting skill. In addition to its beautiful blossoms, it can withstand hurricanes. Some magnolias can grow up to 80 feet tall with a canopy over 40 feet wide. How can such a large organism withstand the pounding of hurricane-force winds? The answer is in the roots. The magnolia's underground root system can grow up to four times the width of its above ground canopy. That is some significant strength and stability!

So it goes with organizations like Alpha. Not only does a ministry require healthy roots (healthy fundamentals) in order to produce fruit, it's also the only way to stay strong through a stormy season. The gale force global challenges of 2020 come to mind.

Thankfully, the Alpha USA organization displayed tremendously healthy fundamentals throughout 2020, creating a solid foundation in the midst of the storm and a fruitful season in an uncertain time.

You were able to see the fundamentals of our finances on page 3. Thanks to you, we remained cash positive through the topsy-turvy year. Additionally, we are able to retain an emergency three-month cash reserve as a backstop going forward.

Beyond the financial position, here are some other indicators of Alpha USA's health from third-party organizations who provide an objective and rigorous "root system" analysis.



In 2020, for the third year in a row, Alpha USA was certified as a flourishing Best Christian

Workplace, reflecting a culture committed to excellence. Best Christian Workplaces Institute helps organizations build flourishing and effective places to work.



Charity Navigator is the largest and most-used evaluator of charities in the U.S., basing its ratings on nonprofits' financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency. Charity Navigator awarded Alpha USA its highest rating of four stars in 2020.



Excellence in Giving (EIG) is a philanthropic advisory firm serving high-capacity donors. Earning the EIG transparency certificate shows Alpha USA is committed to communicating clearly about our financials, impact, and analytics through the firm.



ECFA provides accreditation to leading Christian nonprofit organizations that faithfully demonstrate compliance with established standards for financial accountability, transparency, fundraising, and board governance.



The GuideStar database contains a profile for every tax-exempt nonprofit registered with the IRS. To reach the Platinum level, Alpha USA provided extensive information to GuideStar, demonstrating a deep commitment to transparency and ministry health.





The Marriage Course

THANK YOU

To say 2020 was a challenge would, in many ways, be an understatement for most of us. When we reflect on all of the obstacles navigated and trials endured, God's fingerprints become visible. His faithfulness comes into view, sometimes clearly, and other times we must let the picture he is painting emerge in its own time.

As our team collected the content of this report, carefully curating story after story of provisions, sacrifice, and blessing, we were overwhelmed at his goodness and faithfulness amid the storm. Each item you've read on these pages has his fingerprints on it.

So, too, are your fingerprints reflected in the stories, data, and updates in this report. This work could not have been accomplished without your prayers, along with your gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

Because of you, we were able to equip thousands of churches and ministries in a completely different way at no cost to them in the midst of difficulty. Your generosity helped us continue to give Alpha and multiple new resources away for free, affecting incalculable eternal impact. We are grateful for your support, prayers, and partnership as we work together for the kingdom.



Kyle Wallace

Vice President of Development
Alpha USA

"IN OUR EXPERIENCE AS DONORS, HOSTS AND FACILITATORS OF ALPHA COURSES, ALPHA IS UNIQUELY EFFECTIVE AT ENGAGING BOTH SERIOUS SKEPTICS AND THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN DEEPLY WOUNDED BY THE CHURCH. EVERY TIME WE SEE THE FRUIT OF AN ALPHA COURSE, WE LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND ASK WHY WE DO ANYTHING ELSE WITH OUR TIME AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES; ABSOLUTELY NOTHING COMPARES TO WATCHING INDIVIDUALS MOVE FROM DEATH TO LIFE BEFORE YOUR EYES."

-Ben and Heather Grizzle

The Marriage Courses, re-launched just before the pandemic, help couples invest in their relationship to build a strong marriage. The strain of isolation and the uncertainties of 2020 created a felt need for these refreshed materials, leading to nearly 1,200 courses registered since their release.

Birthing at the same church that gave us Alpha, course founders and hosts Nicky & Sila Lee, address both age-old and more recent challenges many couples navigate. The courses can be offered either online or in-person; before or after Alpha.

What Leaders Say About Alpha



"ALPHA IS A PROVIDENTIAL GIFT FOR US ALL. ALPHA HAS THE FRESHNESS OF CHRIST; IT REFLECTS THE AROMA OF CHRIST."

Bishop Felipe Estévez,
Diocese of St. Augustine



"ALPHA IN ANY FORMAT GIVES US A CREATIVE WAY TO INVITE PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE GOD. WE HAVE SEEN THESE INTRODUCTIONS TO CHRIST ALLEVIATE LONELINESS AND DEPRESSION, BRINGING HOPE AND LIFE."

Alexis Gwin Miller,
New Direction Church



"AS OUR CULTURE BECOMES MORE AND MORE DISENCHANTED WITH TRADITIONAL FORMS OF EXPLORING FAITH, ALPHA HAS MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE. THERE IS NO APPROACH WE'VE FOUND MORE EFFECTIVE TO HELP PEOPLE MEET JESUS IN A WINSOME, RELATIONAL WAY."

Collin Outerbridge,
Nona Church

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