

Transformed on the Inside: Alpha in Prisons

Since 1995, *Alpha For Prisons* has helped over 100,000 men and women prisoners in the UK to encounter Jesus, draw on the power of the Holy Spirit to make a positive change in their life, and turn away from crime. Alpha is now registered in 80% of British prisons in the UK - and running in a further 74 countries around the world.

The Alpha course helps inmates discover the real meaning of their lives. Talks (which include *How can I resist evil?* and *How can I make the most of the rest of my life?*) are followed by small group discussions led by trained volunteers.



Alpha helps prisoners make a long-lasting commitment to real change, which means they are less likely to re-offend on release. The Alpha team also help prisoners find an effective rehabilitation programme - like Alpha's sister charity *Caring For Ex-Offenders* which mentors ex-prisoners to help them avoid re-offending. Research indicates that the re-offending rate for ex-prisoners on the CFEO programme is 50% less than the national re-offending rate.

Alpha volunteers find the prisoners are deeply grateful for their time and support; many lasting friendships have developed. *Alpha for Prisons* also helps prisoners maintain contact and positive relationships with their families.

Alpha For Prisons is led by Revd Paul Cowley, himself an ex-offender. With your help, Paul's team will make Alpha available to more prisoners around the world.

UK prison: the facts

70% of those entering prison have a drug misuse problem.

65% of adult prisoners have a numeracy ability at or below that expected of an eleven year-old.

41 women attempted suicide on Mothering Sunday 2005 in one prison alone.

One in four women prisoners has spent time in local authority care as a child.

Prisoners face a one in five chance of being assaulted.

It costs over £40,000 a year to keep a person in prison.

67% of ex-prisoners re-offend within two years of release. Each re-offence costs the taxpayer £102,000 in criminal justice costs alone. The total annual bill is over £11 billion.

The number of 15-17 year-olds in prison has more than doubled in the past ten years.

"The Alpha Course has given me - more than anything else in prison - the strength and determination to lead a better life. I know that if I live with God I can, and already have become, a better person." Nigel, prisoner, HMP Bullingdon (Oxon)

"My crime included a very large deception, a vast amount of money. Some people would say I had everything but I know now I had nothing. What I have now, what I feel inside surpasses anything I've ever felt before and you can't buy that. All I had to do was ask, it was free of charge. That's what's so brilliant about Alpha, it helps you understand so much. Alpha really has to be the best present I've ever been given. I just wish everybody could feel like I do inside my heart. I've never experienced anything like it."

Danny, prisoner, HMP Wayland (Norfolk)

"The men know they have done wrong and realise they have to be punished. But surely if we are going to lock them away from society for a number of years, then we must offer them a chance to be a better person when they return to society. They often see themselves as worthless, labelled for life, with no hope. The Alpha course restores their faith in themselves as a child of God, restored, forgiven and part of his kingdom."

Prison Officer John Clements (Yatala, Australia)

Alpha International's mission is to give every person - regardless of their age, background or circumstance - the opportunity to attend an Alpha course near where they live, work or study.

Alpha's Global Reach and Impact



350 churches in S.Korea have doubled in size through running Alpha.



Alpha is helping post-Soviet Estonia return to its Christian roots.



The Alpha course is now running in one third of prisons in Australia.



8,000 church leaders in India have been trained to run Alpha courses.



Youth Alpha is now running in 1,000 high schools in Canada.



Peru will host a second Latin America training conference in October.



Alpha is running in houses, churches, and the largest university in Costa Rica.



240 courses are running in Russia for former Gulag labour camp prisoners.



Alpha is helping to transform lives in Argentina's maximum security prison.



Alpha in the Workplace is bearing fruit in offices and factories in Zimbabwe.

"I don't want to do this alone any more."



British medical student Claire, 23, grew up an atheist, strongly against Christianity. She read about Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, but then a friend gave her a copy of the CS Lewis book *Mere Christianity* and told her about Alpha.

"Mere Christianity really got me thinking and I decided to go an Alpha course. I

found the first week absolutely amazing. I loved Nicky Gumbel's talk, which answered lots of questions."

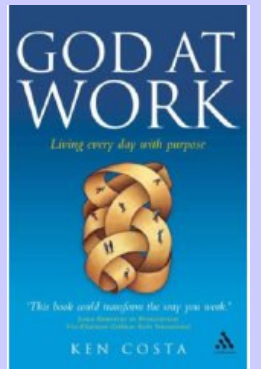
Talking with friends in her small group really helped Claire dig deeper into the issues. By the time of the Alpha weekend, Claire really felt that Christianity had something to offer.

"At the weekend I decided to say a prayer asking God to come into my life. I said, 'I now realise that you're real and I want you in my life. I don't want to do this alone any more'. Some people prayed for me and I had this unbelievable sense of peace. My hatred was taken away. It was absolutely amazing. I cried. I'm now going to church every week. I've been so much happier and at peace since becoming a Christian. My perspective on life has changed. I just want to live my life how God wants me to - however that is. Now I feel I have a relationship with Jesus."

It is only God's grace and the generous involvement of Alpha Partners that enables us to make Alpha available to so many people around the world. Thank you for your support.

Recommended Reading

In *God at Work*, Ken Costa writes about how the Christian faith can and should be lived out in day to day life at work.



Ken speaks openly of his own struggles and the challenge of living out his faith in a corporate environment.

By applying Biblical principles to the 21st century workplace, Ken offers wise and down-to-earth advice on tackling familiar work-related problems: ambition, money, tough decisions, the work-life balance, stress and disappointment.

God at Work is not only for those already engaged in the exciting challenge of living out their Christian faith at work, but also for those exploring the bigger questions of life - people who might describe themselves as sympathetic to Christianity, but not quite as shareholders.

"Full of acumen, shrewdness, hopefulness. In short, a wise book and a delight and profit to read."
Rowan Williams

This title (£7.99) is available from the Holy Trinity Brompton Bookshop during office hours on 020 7052 0222 or online in the Discipleship Resources section at: <https://online.alpha.org/Shop/>
All royalties are re-invested in Alpha.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where is the Alpha course running? In 34,000 locations in 163 countries around the world. Courses are running in places as diverse as churches, universities, schools, homes, prisons, pubs, hotels, offices and factories, sheltered accommodation, and armed forces bases.



An Alpha course small group

Which Christian denominations are using Alpha?

The Alpha course has been endorsed by the leadership of every major Christian denomination – including the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Salvation Army and United Reformed churches. Alpha aims to present the core truths of the Christian faith around which Christians of every denomination can unite.

How many languages is Alpha available in? 87.

That makes the good news available through Alpha to an estimated 96% of the world's population.

How is Alpha funded? Alpha is managed by a Christian charity which relies on the generosity of people who share Alpha's vision of an evangelised world. Alpha's administration costs are paid for by a generous contribution from the Holy Trinity Brompton church in central London. This means that every penny of your gift would go directly to funding ministry, enabling someone somewhere in the world to discover the love of Jesus Christ.

How Can We Serve You?

Do you have a heart for one of the Alpha ministries or perhaps an interest in one of the countries that Alpha is active in; would you like to know more or perhaps get involved? Please contact Adrian Conroy by email at alpha.partners@alpha.org or by phone on 020 7052 0564.

How you could help

A **gift by cheque** would go directly to frontline ministry.

A **regular gift by standing order** helps us budget our work more effectively.

Your support in **prayer** would be a huge encouragement to Alpha ministry teams around the world.

You might wish to encourage your church's leadership to support Alpha through **mission giving**.

You may wish to consider making a donation to Alpha International next time you change **your Will**.

You could make a donation via **your UK tax return** by quoting our unique charity code KAF05JG.

However you choose to help, your support will be valued and appreciated by the whole team. Thank you!

How your donation could make a real difference

£10 per month would help local churches and ministry teams reach out with the good news through Alpha.

£25 would fund an Alpha volunteer visit to a prison, helping someone turn away from crime and discover an authentic relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

£100 will provide a set of Alpha course guest and leader resources for a church in Africa or South America.

£250 would fund a bursary enabling someone from a poorer country to learn how to start and lead the Alpha course by attending an Alpha training conference.

£500 would help Alpha establish a presence on a university campus to help students discover the real meaning of life.

£1,000 would help translate the Alpha course into another language, opening up the good news of Jesus Christ to perhaps many millions more people.

Alpha Partners
Holy Trinity Brompton
Brompton Road
London SW7 1JA

Telephone: 020 7052 0564
Email: alpha.partners@alpha.org

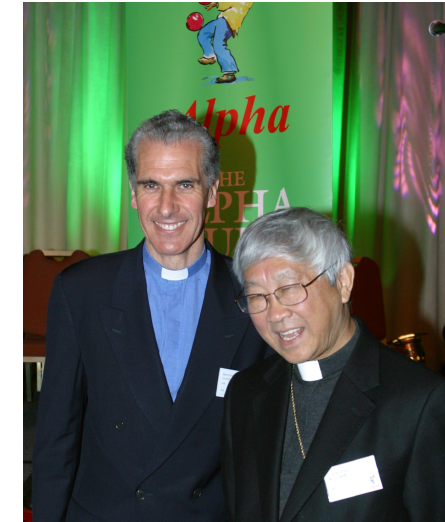
Alpha International is registered charity number 1086179

Alpha Partners Quarterly Report

SUMMER 2007



Alpha in China



Rev. Nicky Gumbel with Cardinal Zen

Jackie Pullinger-To and worship leader Tim Hughes joined Nicky Gumbel and 2,000 Chinese pastors in Hong Kong for the Global Chinese Alpha Conference in April.

Demonstrating Alpha's ecumenical appeal, the conference was formally opened by Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun and the Anglican Archbishop Paul Kwong.

Pastors attended from 25 countries, including China, Korea, Japan and ex-patriot communities in the USA. They heard seminars on starting and running effective Alpha courses in Chinese.

Pastor Eddie Ma reported that Alpha had been instrumental in growing his

Baptist church in Hong Kong from 300 to 1,500 members. Eddie comments: *'The people who come through Alpha get filled with the Holy Spirit. They are very mission-minded.'*

An Alpha team from the Philippines told the Conference they had a heart to reach out to the young in their country. Twelve million parents work abroad - many as domestic staff - to support their family, meaning many children are brought up in families with one parent - or less.

Tim Hughes lead a worship event with Australian band Planetshakers. Tim says: *"The worship was amazing. Planetshakers are a bit like Hillsong, but they bounce a lot higher!"*

The Alpha course has been translated into Cantonese and Mandarin, which makes the good news open to a potential 1.6 billion people. Cardinal Zen commented that Alpha is highly applicable to Chinese culture.

It is conservatively estimated that 10% of people in China are Christian. Most worship at home churches because there are few church buildings. The main denomination is the Three Self Church. Three Self is a Chinese abbreviation for the three principles of self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation i.e. mission work.

The grace of God and the generous involvement of Alpha Partners has enabled so much:

10,000,000 people worldwide have heard the good news of Jesus Christ by attending an Alpha course.

34,000 Alpha courses are running in **163** countries around the world.

Alpha is available in **87** languages, making the good news potentially available through Alpha to **96%** of the world's population.

Awareness of Alpha as a Christian course has climbed to **23%** of the adult population in the UK.

Student Alpha is available to students attending **60%** of British universities.

Alpha is being broadcast via satellite to a potential **115 million** homes across the Middle East and North Africa.

40 Russian Orthodox Church Bishops and Archbishops have discussed how to run Alpha in their church. One commented: *Alpha is helping the Orthodoxy to rediscover its soul.*

Alpha courses have started running in **hotels** in Scotland and **senior citizen residential homes** across Britain.

Alpha International's mission is to give every person - regardless of their age, background or circumstance - the opportunity to attend an Alpha course near where they live, work or study.