



The Catholic Parish of Saint Gregory the Great Northampton



PART OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON, REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 234091

OUR
VISION

**“A truly thriving Catholic community
confidently and humbly proclaiming the
Good News of Jesus Christ.”**

OUR
VISION

The Methodology of Alpha

“Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others. If you are a speaker, speak in words which seem to come from God; if you are a helper, help as though every action was done at God’s orders; so that in everything God may receive the glory, through Jesus Christ, since to him alone belong all glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.”
(1 Peter 4:10-11)

St Peter could be describing the basis for how Alpha works. The verse before this passage tells Christians to be hospitable without complaining, and hospitality is a virtue that underpins Alpha. The meeting begins with a meal, and this responds to the number of times in the Gospel that we find Jesus teaching in the context of a meal. In the first sign that Jesus gave at Cana, the occasion was a wedding reception, and the sign is that Jesus gave the best wine; this is the standard of hospitality that is our aim at Alpha. (Because many people come by car, we don’t actually serve wine, but the food is always good.)

After the meal, at which human companionship builds bonds of connection, there is a short video presentation on some aspect of Christian life and teaching. (The word ‘companion’ comes from two Latin words, ‘cum’ meaning ‘with’ and ‘panis’ meaning bread. Thus a companion is someone with whom you share a meal.)

Following the video, there is conversation round the table, and one of the people at table is responsible for keeping it on the subject of the film, while allowing (indeed, encouraging) everyone to have their say, whatever they may think.

Not everyone who comes to Alpha experiences an immediate conversion, but everyone is given something to think about, and the feed-back that we receive is that pretty much everyone enjoys the experience.

Some who come on Alpha are already regular Mass-goers and practicing Christians. For them, Alpha acts as a boost to their faith, deepens their understanding and re-vitalises their commitment. This is particularly true for those whose last time of catechesis was in preparation for their Confirmation, maybe many years ago.

Alpha cannot be run by one person, it takes teams, a large team to run Alpha. The first teams are involved in hospitality, and the catering team’s work is vital. Their task is to work out the menu, do the shopping, and then cook the food. We are blessed with a commercial-standard kitchen, and to ensure health and hygiene, the catering team will have done an on-line course to gain a certificate.

A separate team will have come in during the afternoon to prepare the room, making sure that it is clean, setting the tables and chairs, and decorating the tables. There is a tea-break during which the two teams relax and enjoy each other’s company.

There are two teams that come in a bit later, most of them will have been at work through the day. They are the host team and the table leadership team. The host team are there to welcome the guests as they arrive; the table leadership team have a brief meeting to remind themselves of the topic for the evening. There is a time of prayer, to which anyone who is able will come.

The last team is very important! They come in to share the meal, but then stay behind to wash up (although as there is a commercial dishwasher in the kitchen, this is not too arduous. (The commercial dishwasher does the job in two minutes, unlike a domestic one.)

At the end of the evening the table leadership team stay behind to close the evening in prayer for all those who have helped or attended.

Our next Alpha will be in the Autumn, (dates inside) and the existing teams are always ready to welcome new members!

Stella Maris (Apostleship of the Sea)

Thank you for your support last week, the collection for Stella Maris (£232.20) and for the supply of woollen hats. Julian Wong, is the Stella Maris Regional Lay Port Chaplain for the ports in East Anglia. He gives an example of his work:

On Tuesday 9th July – a seafarer had a heart attack onboard. On arrival at Felixstowe Port in the night, he was sent to the Ipswich Hospital A & E dept in a taxi. He messaged me at breakfast time. I went straight to see him. The next day I visited him at the hospital’s Heart Centre, gave him Holy Communion and prayed for him, his family and the doctors and nurses looking after him just before he was given his angiogram and insertion of a stent. An hour later when

I saw him again, he was smiling and very relieved that everything had gone well.

I emailed Fr John Mission, the National Director of Stella Maris in Cebu, Philippines and told him about this case and requested a grant for the seafarer while he is recovering. He replied, giving thanks for the kind hearted support for the seafarer and secondly, he has requested the contact details of the seafarer’s family. So that he can offer support to them.

This is a clear demonstration that Stella Maris is truly a world-wide Catholic ship visiting network, supporting seafarers.

Notices of Interest

Repository: The Repository is open after Sunday Masses for the sale of cards and religious goods. Any queries or volunteers to 01604 629103 or Kath.healey.789@gmail.com

Bible Alive for July & August is now available - only £3.00! If you wish to purchase a copy, they are in the narthex as you come into church.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Baptism Preparation: The next session will be on Monday 12th August at 7pm in the Sacristy. Please note you will need to phone Deacon Michael on 07999808997 before you attend, to book a place.

First Holy Communion 2025/6: An important date for you diaries! If you have a child in year 3 or older who wishes to make their First Communion next Summer there will be a meeting on 6th October after 11am Mass. It's a way off but very important so please save the date!

Confirmation in 2024: The Confirmation will be on Friday evening, 28th June at 7.00 pm. Email to childrens.liturgv@stgregory.org.uk for further information.

Parish Finances: Much the easiest way to support the parish financially is through a standing order directly from your own bank account. The information required for this is as follows:

Bank; **NatWest**

Sort Code; **60-06-11**

Account Number; **46898093**

Account Name; **Northampton Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust**

Payment Ref; Parish Name/Area: **(St. Gregory's, Northampton)**

Stella Maris: Thank you for giving to Sea Sunday. Your generous gifts will ensure that Stella Maris chaplains can continue to be a friend for seafarers and fishers in times of need. To find out more how your support helps those who live and work at sea please visit www.stellamaris.org.uk

Pilgrimage to Walsingham in Reparation & Prayer for the Sanctity of Life: Sat. 3rd Aug, led by Bishop David, commencing with Mass at 12pm in the Chapel of Reconciliation. Coach seats available from various pick-up points - see poster for full details, or go to prolifepilgrimage.org to book online.

Tots @ St Gregory's: We have our last session before the summer holidays on Tuesday 16th July from 9:30 - 11:30 and we will start again on Tuesday 10th September.

Chinese Language Mass with Bishop Joseph Ha on 24th July at St Edward the Confessor, Milton Keynes. All welcome. Rosary at 6pm followed by Mass. At 7.30pm we hope to have a bring-&-share meal. Please email for more details - mk.chinese.catholic@gmail.com.

Divine Music Day: Sat 21st Sept. 11am to 3.30pm. Holy Ghost, Westbourne Road, Luton, LU48JD. When the Church Sings, She Comes Alive! A day of song & prayer with Chris Walker. "Come for practical ways to enliven our parish music & help our musicians prepare for the Year of Prayer & Jubilee." Christopher Walker is an inspirational Composer & Conductor of Church Music. Adults £10, children free but accompanied by an adult. Booking details to follow. For Group bookings please email music@northamptondiocese.org

Youth Worker Vacancy: The Diocese is currently recruiting for a Youth Worker to join the Youth Ministry Office, 35 hours pw & will include evening & weekend work. Full info for the position, including how to apply, visit <https://northamptondiocese.org/jobs/>

Fire Safety: Please be careful with the votive candle stands, and especially please ensure that children are safe. Unlit candles must not be placed on the trays under the places for candles and candles must not be stacked one on top of another.

Diocesan Mass for Marriage: The annual Mass for Marriage & Family Life will be celebrated by Bishop David on 7 Sept at Northampton Cathedral. Gathering will be from 11:30am followed by Mass at 12pm. Bishop David will give his pastoral blessing to those couples celebrating significant milestones in their marriage i.e. 1, 10, 20, 25, 30, 40, 50, 60 years etc. If this is a special anniversary year for you please contact Sam Canning (MFL Co-ordinator) via email mfl@northamptondiocese.org by 25th August. Everyone welcome to attend & there will be refreshments after Mass in the Cathedral Centre.

Northampton Diocese Catholic Charismatic Renewal Our diocesan Catholic Charismatic Renewal team warmly invite you to join them on Saturday 27 July at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Milton Keynes for a day of renewal.

The day includes a time of Adoration, praise and worship, Mass and a talk from Charles and Sue Whitehead on the theme of 'Walk The Walk'.

Choir Notes: I have had to change several of the dates of our Saturday practices, 11-12:30. The new details are July 13; August 24; Oct 12; Nov 9, 16, 23, 30; Dec 7 and 14, then some time in February 2025 (Happy Christmas!). *Alec*

Abington Avenue URC Friday Lunch - enjoy a hot lunch and pudding for £6 every Friday! Refreshments from 10.30am, lunch 12pm (**pre-booking required**). For more info please email office.aaurc@gmail.com or visit www.aaurc.co.uk

Church Cleaning: Helpers needed to clean the Church on last Sat. every month (**next – 27th July**), after morning Mass. All welcome, especially younger, more energetic ones!

Bl. Cyprian Tansi Prayer Group prays together online via Skype and by telephone and on the first Saturday of the month, here in the Hall: 10.00 am-12.00 pm.

March For Life UK happens in London on Sat. 7th September. This year's theme is "Abortion isn't Healthcare". Join thousands at this family-friendly event. Find out more at marchforlife.co.uk

Pilgrimage to Northern France You are invited to join Bishop David & Canon John Udris on pilgrimage to Northern France from 15-22 Oct. For more details visit <https://northamptondiocese.org/france/>

Refreshment Donations:

Below is the schedule for refreshment donations through the year:

From the first Sunday in Advent

to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord: The Hope Centre

From the Second Sunday in ordinary time

to the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday: Gregory Care

Through Lent and Eastertide: CAFOD

Ordinary Time until the end of August: **Refreshment Fund**

September until the Harvest collection: CAFOD

After harvest until the beginning of Advent: The Bible Society

Gregory Care

Please contact Gregory Care (07434669011)

if you or anyone you know would benefit from receiving a food parcel, or is in material need.

Prayer for Peace for Ukraine and the Holy Land:

Please continue to pray for an end to wars, and for all victims of war:

O God, author and lover of peace,

to know you is to live, to serve you is to reign.

Defend against every attack those who cry to you

so that we, who trust in your protection,

may not fear the weapons of any foe.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,

who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen

Scripture Readings 21st July 2024, 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Jeremiah was preaching around 600 BC. For forty years before the exile he reminded Judah's rulers how they had broken the covenant, worshipping other gods and taking advantage of the poor. His warnings were ignored, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the people taken into exile in Babylon.

But the Lord promises to rescue his people. He will make a new covenant and send a descendant of David to rule with truth, integrity and honesty.

The Psalm celebrates God's loving care for his people, like a shepherd guarding and guiding his flock, and looking forward to his generous end-time feast.

Paul tells the Ephesians that Gentiles and Jews, previously separated by the Law, have now become one "by the blood of Christ". The Law's barriers have been broken down, and God's covenant now

extends to Gentiles. Early proposals for Christians to ignore the Jewish Scriptures were rejected, and the Old Testament readings now included at Mass can help our faith.

Mark's Gospel has described the death of John the Baptist while the apostles were away on their mission. On their return Jesus takes them away 'on retreat'. But the crowds follow, setting the scene for the feeding miracles. For the next five weeks we switch to John's Gospel for a fuller account of Eucharistic feeding.

Psalm Response:

**The Lord is my shepherd:
there is nothing I shall want.**

(Jeremiah 23: 1-6; Psalm 22(23); Eph 2: 13-18; Mark 6: 30-34)

Chris Oliver

Alpha in the Autumn — Dates and Subjects

First session: September 17th Is there more to life than this?	"Wake, Eat, Sleep, Repeat". Or maybe, "Wake, Work, Party, Sleep it off, Repeat". The algorithm of life can seem very dull — a bit like a hamster in a wheel. Is that really all that life is about? No more than a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing. Come and see!
Second Session September 24th Who is Jesus?	There are some very strange ideas about Jesus. Did he land from Krypton? Was he a prophet? Did he actually exist at all? Many people dismiss Jesus without knowing about him at all. Come and find out who Jesus really is.
Third Session October 1st Why did Jesus die?	Most people enjoy celebrating Christmas and pictures of the manger and Baby Jesus evoke happy thoughts of Christmas Past and presents and parties. Easter is another story altogether. Why is Good Friday 'good' anyway.
Fourth Session October 8th How can I have faith?	Hasn't science disproved religion? If so, why are many scientists also Christian? How can religion and science be compatible? What place has religion in a modern world? In fact there is a great deal of genuine evidence of the truth of the Christian faith.
Fifth Session October 15th Why and how do I pray?	If God is real and he loves us, we ought to talk to him. It is through this that our relationship with him is able to deepen and grow. We can thank him for his many gifts to us, and ask him for our needs and his guidance. And we can listen to him.
Sixth Session: October 22nd Why and how should I read the Bible?	The Bible is a big book, and not an easy read. It is made up of many different types of literature and needs to be read with understanding. But it is inspired by God, and through the words of the Bible we can hear God speaking to us.
Seventh Session November 5th How does God guide us?	Jesus promised us the Spirit to guide us, and to lead the Church into all truth. His Spirit can speak through our conscience and in our hearts. We find his word in the Scriptures and in the teaching of the Church.
Eighth Session November 12th Does God heal today?	The Gospels are full of healing miracles, and even today miraculous healings take place. But medical research through human knowledge and wisdom is a gift from God. God also heals relationships and calms troubled minds.
Alpha Away-Day November 16 th (Saturday) Who is The Holy Spirit?	God breathed his spirit into humanity at the dawn of creation, and his spirit remains the life-giver.
Ninth Session November 19th How can I resist evil?	The first question is "why should I resist evil?" It is only when we realise that it is evil to live simply for my own pleasure and satisfaction, trampling on the lives of others that the question of resisting evil can be asked. God's first command is one of love.
Tenth Session November 26th Why and how should I tell others?	When you have found something good, you want to share it, and the Good News of the Gospel needs to be shared. Sadly, too many people misunderstand the message of the Church and the true message of God's Good News.
Eleventh Session December 3rd What about the Church?	Jesus gathered a group of people around himself, he taught them and gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit. That community continues to exist; it is called 'The Church'. Spread now across the entire world, the Church continues to worship God and tries to do his will.

If you are able to help in any way, please contact Daniel Davighi or speak to Fr Andrew. Alpha can only work with many people in the various teams described on the front page of this newsletter. For more information and to book please see:

<https://stgregory.org.uk/alpha>