

## ALPHA IN THE CATHEDRAL PARISH

Over recent months, parishioners from the Cathedral Parish and beyond have participated in the Alpha series. Alpha is an adult faith program originating in the U.K. and has been operating in Christian Churches for many years.

Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith, typically run over eleven weeks. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation. Alpha is run all around the globe, and everyone is welcome. It runs in cafés, churches, universities, homes, bars—you name it. No two Alphas look the same, but generally they have three key things in common: food, a talk and good conversation.



The talks are designed to engage and inspire conversation. Usually around thirty minutes long, they can be given as a live talk or played as a video. They explore the big issues around faith and unpack the basics of Christianity, addressing questions from *Who is Jesus?* and *How can we have faith?* to *Why and how do I pray?* and *How does God guide us?*

Probably the most important part of any Alpha: the chance to share thoughts and ideas on the topic, and simply discuss it in a small group. There's no obligation to say anything and there's nothing you can't say (seriously). It's an opportunity to hear from others and contribute your own perspective in an honest, friendly and open environment.

Over the eleven weeks of Alpha, the attendance ranged with as many as twenty people attending with less on some cold Ballarat evenings!

Some of the comments that have been received as part of the evaluation of the Alpha series:

- *The ALPHA topics were very pertinent, and I experienced a challenging and deepening of my Christian faith and walk.*
- *As we gathered and connected with fellow parishioners in a more meaningful way encouraging each other, I looked forward to the Thursdays, and hope to have similar future gatherings. May the thirst and fire of God's love and understanding spread through our parishes*
- *It has increased my enthusiasm to be part of something ongoing relating to the Word, and growing together in outreach-which many of the group also shared*

- *The Alpha adult program was an inspiring way to help us and teach us more about God's ways in a very relaxing, friendly and simple manner. Jamie's way of teaching is rather biblical and truthful but still practical and his examples can be related to simple things that we as ordinary people can also relate to.*
- *The Alpha program is a wonderful experience, not only meeting wonderful people but it has also been an opportunity to be filled with God's grace through His teachings. May it continue to inspire more people, young adults and adults in life, to learn more about God and how wonderful He can be.*

The Victorian coordinator for Alpha is Lorraine McCarthy, who is based in Melbourne but is originally from Simpson in our Ballarat Diocese! Lorraine is a great contact and can provide easy access to the free online Alpha resources. <http://alpha.org>

*Fr Justin Driscoll*