



October 2008

Alpha

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Autumn term sees the launch of the 2008 National Alpha Campaign.

Posters on billboards, buses, church notice boards and taxis will invite people to consider:

Is this it?

And asks:

'If God did exist what would you ask?...'

with details of how to engage in a local Alpha course.

Alpha is an opportunity for anyone to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed setting over ten thought-provoking weekly sessions, with a day or week-end away.

Over 7,000 courses are currently running across British Isles, meeting anywhere from homes to church buildings, cafes or pubs. Some courses are held during the day or lunch hour, most are evening courses.

Over 2 million people in the UK and 11 million worldwide have now attended an Alpha course, an opportunity to explore the meaning of life, running in tens of thousands of churches of all denominations across the world.

Alpha courses are also run in chaplaincies, gyms, prisons, offices, residential homes, universities, parent and toddler groups, youth clubs, armed forces bases and schools, and with the deaf, blind, foreign language groups and those who speak English as an overseas language. There are at least 10 courses running in Colchester this term.

We want to pray for communities and

the impact of Autumn Alpha suppers and courses that are planned.

We give thanks for:

- The effectiveness of Alpha over the years
- Every life that has been changed by attending the Alpha course
- The influence of Alpha abroad, in prisons, in business with youth, within the media

We continue to pray for:

- Our community, our friends, neighbours and work colleagues
- The opportunity to invite them to a course.
- The congregations running these courses and their Alpha team.
- The people of Colchester; that every person is exposed to the power of the gospel and is given opportunity to respond.

"What Alpha offers, and what is attracting thousands of people, is permission, rare in secular culture, to discuss the big questions - life and death and their meaning."

The Guardian.

"What distinguishes Alpha from other initiatives is the easy-going, relaxed feel of the proceedings - that, and its astonishing success."

The Times.



Feedback - Hope on the Streets

On Saturday 30th August at least 130 volunteers from 48 congregations took part in Hope on the Streets in Colchester town centre. Here are some of their stories.

Journey into Wholeness

It was a great day! I was on the Journey into Wholeness stall and met one lady who said she was a seeker...and had been searching for some time since her son's death. She wanted prayer and has promised to attend a church in the future. She did not have a Bible so she was pleased to accept a New Testament and I encouraged her to start at Mark's gospel. I also had the encouragement of meeting somebody who remembered I had prayed for one of the babies I delivered and it had been a step in the chain to bring her to the Lord. *Joan*

Prayer Room

Knitting in the prayer room was really amazing, once people had their hands occupied they seemed to let their guard down and the Holy Spirit was able to come and be with them. It was lovely seeing lots of people letting go and being comforted and leaving with a much lighter step. *Carol*

I am still buzzing after the Hope on the Streets day. It was wonderful to be part of something much bigger than just our contribution. I loved being able to share with people in the prayer room, and then point them onto the free BBQ, or maybe some prayer for healing, or perhaps to go and listen to the music. I think it was an amazing picture of the diversity and richness of God's kingdom - from hip hop rap to silent prayer!

Thank God for much favour on the day and leading up. This was the easiest prayer room to set up, run and pack up that we have done in two and a half years.

My favourite moments were chatting to people at the feast table in the prayer room and giving them free, wonderful cake! Also silent prayer and dancing in the prayer room, in the midst of the bustle of the town centre. Let's do more together, soon! *Richard*

Jesus Deck

We were underway by 11:30 am and ran until 4 pm. The stall was staffed by myself, and Barbara Asi and Julie Hatch. Two of us spoke to shoppers whilst the third sat inside at a table and used the cards with the enquirer. There was very little time when we did not have someone in the gazebo.

Eighteen people took part. We advertised "Free session of up to fifteen minutes today" and that probably was the average amount of time we took. A small number of Christians involved with the other events took part.

We found it very easy to get into conversation. After assuring the person that this was not Tarot, (which they were all relieved to hear) and not fortune telling, each of the conversations took a different course. We were conscious not only of the need to be clear in our sharing of the Jesus story, but also that the Holy Spirit was able to prompt us with words about that person's circumstances that we didn't know. Thus we were able to make links between the gospel stories and the person's life. Many people shared details about their past. Some people had some knowledge of the story of Jesus and part of the session consisted of them telling us the story. Otherwise the rest were much more hazy, but it was easy to tell the story without seeming to patronise them. One couple had the least knowledge and it was wonderful to be able to tell the story of the Resurrection and Mary Magdalene

from their choice of card. One person responded with a serious desire to follow Christ. Many had some past involvement with a church and it may be that this might be a prompt to return.

This is a wonderful way to share the good news of Jesus. We all want to do it again. *Penny*

Healing Rooms

What a glorious day!! Not only with the weather, but also with the move of God that there was in Colchester. At Healing Rooms we had the privilege of praying for at least 25 people and a few more who didn't fill in a form. We gave out gift packs to those who were led to the Lord for the first time and to those who made re-dedications. All 5 packs that I brought with me were given out and I need to order three more and send them off in the post!! Praise the Lord for His new life!! People generally seemed interested and most received easily as we prayed for them. We say 'Thank you' for inviting us to be a part of this - it was a privilege to be there. So good to see the many churches, organisations and ministries working together to put on this event. The Lord blesses where there is unity, doesn't He. The Colchester folk who are not usually on the team at Healing Rooms did great. Everyone mucked in wherever needed, were willing to go the extra mile when necessary and were a real blessing and pleasure to work with. *Dorothy*

Hope Prayer Night to seek God for our town, and for future Hope events

Friday 17th October

8pm - 10pm - venue TBC

From 10.15pm - through the night - Colchester Baptist Church, Eld Lane

Through the Gateway - Hope for Justice

Today, slavery is rife throughout the world - in fact as you read this two children per minute are being sold. Modern slavery (as it is termed) takes many different forms: bonded slavery, forced labour, forced marriage, domestic slavery and human trafficking for the means of sexual exploitation. Slavery means that a person is abducted, sold or kept against their will; their freedom and human rights are denied them; usually cruelty and violence is employed to beat them into submission, along with threats and intimidation.

Victims of sexual exploitation are trafficked from country to country, their passports taken away from them. Or they may be trafficked domestically. They may be kept in saunas and brothels, or hidden away in private houses and apartments. Child slaves can be found working on cocoa plantations or in factories, working back-breaking hours in appalling conditions with little or no payment. They may be found working as domestic slaves, or they may be abducted into rebel armies where they are not only brutalized but also forced to become brutal.

Other types of slavery today may include camel jockeying, deep sea slavery etc. Poverty is a prime factor in slavery, along with cultures where it is acceptable for families to sell their children, or allows low-caste systems to flourish, such as the Dalits in India. However slavery, abduction and trafficking are not confined only to the poor, but people of greater means can be lured or groomed by various kinds of enticement. For every victim of slavery there is violation of their most basic human rights.

FACTS:

- 27 Million people in slavery (*United nations, Amnesty Int.*)
- 1.2 million children trafficked each year (*UNICEF UK*)
- 126 million children work in the worst forms of child labour (*UNICEF*)
- \$9.5 billion a year is made from the slave trade (*US dept of State*)
- 250 thousand Dalits in India, also known as untouchables (*Dalit Freedom network*)

All over the world today various forms of slavery, bonded and child labour, human trafficking for the sex trade take place. The difference in India is both the scale and the 3000 years of hopelessness that caste discrimination has produced.

These people, numbering some 250,000,000, were previously known as 'Untouchables' but now more often referred to as 'Dalits', a title taken for themselves meaning broken or crushed. They are regularly treated as less than human and can never escape their life of slavery and degradation. They are told from birth that they are worthless and can contaminate anyone from a higher caste by their presence alone.

Almost exclusively all the women trafficked into the sex trade or ritual temple prostitution, all the victims of bonded and child labour, all of those living in abject poverty, all come from the Dalits and lower castes. It has been estimated that there is more hidden slavery in India today than in any place, at any time in history. Certainly this is the longest standing issue of slavery in human history!

These people are crying out to the church for help in their fight for emancipation. Help for their women as they suffer abuse and

gender exploitation. Freedom for their children as they grow up knowing no hope or escape from an inhuman system of modern slavery and apartheid.

It's time to take a Stand on their behalf! It's time that they know the dignity of being created in the image of God. It's time to free the Dalit child through access to quality education that can give them a hope and choice for the future.

Visit www.daliteducation.org

The Stand is an event to be held at the NEC Birmingham on November 8th 2008. Hope for Justice is a joint initiative between Care, Stop the Traffik, Tearfund, Hope for Justice, IJM, Jubilee Action, Hope 08, A21 campaign, Youth for Christ, and Operation Mobilisation

"What we are required to do now is STAND erect and look the world in the face and do our duty without fear or favour"
WINSTON CHURCHILL

"For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for **precious** is their blood in his sight."
Ps 72: 12-14

CYO Celebration is on Saturday
1st November at 7.45 pm
St John's Church, St John's
Close

Prayer Breakfast
Date: Saturday 4th October
Time: 8.30 am - 10 am
Kingsland Church Lexden,
2 London Road Lexden

Colchester Institute

Firstly, thank you for all your prayers over the last year. We've had some ups and we've had some downs but even though I haven't seen the end results yet, I know that it was worth it!

This year it looks set to be a challenge with half of the Colchester Institute site being transformed into a building site. Please pray that the physical barriers will not prevent the CU from prospering this year. Please also pray that as the old buildings are brought down and replaced with the new, there will be a change in the spiritual climate:

CYO

We've never had such a busy start to the new school year, with four full weeks in four different schools before half term. So we're looking forward to some amazing opportunities to take the message of Jesus to thousands of young people.

Collective in St Benedict's College 29th September – 3rd October

Collective, the CYO team and others will be involved in a week's mission to Year 9 and 10 students, leading up to the launch of a new Youth Alpha which we will be helping to support.

Collective in Colchester Royal Grammar School 6th – 10th October

Collective were in the Grammar School for a couple of days in July and made quite an impression! Again, we will be working together and linking into the Christian lunchtime groups here.

Collective in Stanway School 20th – 24th October

The week here will link in with

that as the old goes the new will come. When we last prayer walked around the site a word was given about unblocking wells. Little did we know at the time that the building works would literally unblock a well!

Please pray for a release of springs of living water to flow through the place releasing the Christians into a new ministry amongst the staff and students and releasing the captive hearts of all those who do not yet know Christ as their Saviour.

Having been inspired by "Hope 08" I am keen that the CU is more than a group of Christians meeting to-

youth work in three local churches, and there are lots of follow-up possibilities because the week after the mission is half term.

Thank you to everyone who has offered to help financially with the treatment Ally needs for her shoulder. We continue to pray for her complete healing.

All the members of Collective are making decisions about whether they continue with the band in 2009.

Tom Haward and his wife Abi will be taking a year out and are moving to New Zealand. This means Tom will be leaving CYO on Saturday 1st November. Please pray for Tom and Abi as they move, and for Tim and the CYO trustees as they consider the way forward.

Colchester Soup Run

Please consider donating produce from your Harvest Thanksgiving Services to the Colchester Soup Run.

Contact John Morgan 767872

gether in a private room: I want to reach out to share God's love in my community. Please pray that God would work through our publicity both on the college website and through the posters and fliers to bring new Christians into the CU who are like minded and who will inspire each other to serve God in the college.

I look forward to sharing with you the stories about how God is transforming the Colchester Institute!

Thanks" *Natasha*

Spiritual Healing Day

Teaching, worship, training and ministry. With Randall Staley and Thomas Yap

On: Saturday 18th October.

Time: 9 am - 4.30 pm at Orchard Baptist Church (address below)

You can register via:
office@orchardbaptistchurch.co.uk
or in writing to:
Church Office, 23 Mersea Road,
Blackheath CO2 0AE

Whole Hearted Singing

Sing Gospel

♪ From a Selection of Songs New & Traditional, With Song Leader & Vocal Tutor Jeanette Cleary.

Greenstead Community Centre
Hawthorn Avenue, Colchester
Time: 10.30am - 12.30pm
Every Saturday 13th September
till... 13th December

Any Age, any Ability.

♪ No music reading, vocal skill or faith necessary, just a desire to explore and express your spiritual and musical creativity.

£5 Per Session 01206 500429
or 07954 371370

j.net@naturalvoice.net -
www.naturalvoice.net

The Economy

Economic forecasts predict difficult times ahead for the economy. Families are noticing increased pressure on finances through increased fuel and food prices. We take this opportunity to come before God.

- 30,000 people worldwide die each day because of poverty.
- The inflation rate in Zimbabwe in June this year was at least 11,250,000%, and expected to rise to over 50,000,000% by September.
- Almost half the world - 3 billion people - live on less than \$2.50 per day.

We thank God for

- All His provision; our homes,

families, friends, jobs, education, health care

- The economic stability we have known

We repent of

- Any fear of want, any hoarding or meanness
- Lack of contentment
- Grumbling and complaining, negative and destructive thinking and words

We pray for

- Wisdom for those in government, regulators and the city
- Compassion for those who live on the edge of society, who already find life challenging or difficult

- Peace for those afraid of losing their jobs, homes, or both
- A strengthening of family life
- The Church to have courage, to keep justice at the centre and not to succumb to the spirit of the age
- The media to report responsibly and without "hype"
- New shapes in our communities where we help each other
- Opportunities to show God's love in words and actions
- Increased creativity to use what we have for the kingdom
- A sense of perspective, recognising that our country is relatively wealthy

Marie

Other news

Colchester Churches working together for Advent.

Places are still available in a choir that is being formed from churches across Colchester, to present two contrasting Advent events.

Sharers in the Promise, which takes place on Saturday 29th November at St Botolph's Church, combines music from many different church traditions, dance and drama in a colourful and thought-provoking evening.

On Thursday 11th December, Graham Kendrick's **Dreaming of a Holy Night** comes to Charter Hall.

There is an introductory choir workshop on Saturday 27th September, 2 – 5pm, at the Salvation Army in Butt Road. Further rehearsals will take place on 6th and 21st October, 6th, 19th and 23rd November. This is an exciting opportunity for singers from

many different churches to work together. If you would like to be involved, please contact Richard Hubbard on 01206 564216, email richard@cantusfirmus.org.uk. See also the websites www.sharersinthepromise.com and www.grahamkendrick.co.uk.

Thanks, Richard Hubbard

World Mental Health Week Events. Mind and Spirit in association with NEST (North Essex User Network) have organised the following events:

Celebrating our Faith, informal worship service on Sunday 5th October 2008, at 7pm at Plume Avenue URC and:

Taking our Spiritual Health Seriously at the Friends' Meeting House Church street Colchester. Tuesday 7th October, 12-3pm.

For more information tel: nest 08450 906378 or book online:

bobandro@ntlworld.com

Have you been inspired by BBC's Last Choir Standing? Or just like to sing in the bath?

SING FOR WATER - ESSEX SATURDAY 18TH OCTOBER.

Time: 10AM - 5PM at

COLCHESTER INSTITUTE

Cost £15 inc lunch and African drumming demonstration!

Sing for Water - Essex is a community singing event that takes place every year to raise funds for WaterAid.

It involves singing in harmony just for fun and is open to anyone and everyone regardless of musical ability or experience. Details and buy tickets from Jan Hughes: 01206

383445 [janethugh-](mailto:janethughes5@hotmail.com)

es5@hotmail.com or Diana

Harding 01787 477795

hardingdiana@hotmail.com

Water for Life: it costs £15 to provide one person with access to safe water and effective sanitation in the world's poorest countries.