

CHARISMATIC RENEWAL OFFICE NEWSLETTER

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May / June 2002

Mission Statement:



Our mission is to help people respond to the call to conversion to the lordship of Jesus Christ, to facilitate transformation through Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and to assist in the spiritual renewal of people and parishes.

Alpha

Editor's Note: This is a continuation of the interview conducted last month with Margene Vessel, the local representative for Alpha.

CRO: Since this newsletter is the Charismatic Renewal Office Newsletter, how large a component of the Alpha process is the charismatic dimension?

MARGENE: I think the Holy Spirit is a part of everything that the Alpha course is about. We encourage people to talk with God. We encourage people to pray in the Spirit. At the last weekend, we had two women who, during the time of worship, were sitting listening to music practice. One of the worshippers said, "Do you ladies want to speak in tongues before the Spirit right now?" And they said, "Well, yes we do." So the music minister went over to them and said, "I think the Spirit is doing something right now." She prayed for them, and they both started speaking in tongues right there. They hadn't even heard the formal talk! I have so many stories. If you think of the Charismatic Renewal as affecting all of our lives and that all of our lives are soaked in the Spirit, then Alpha, I think, is totally about Charismatic Renewal. We encourage all the gifts: wisdom, faith, healing, etc.

CRO: What are the talks subsequent to the weekend?

MARGENE: "How to Resist Evil" - "How Do I Witness to Others?" - "Does God Heal Today?" and one on "The Church." In the talk on healing, you don't break into small groups. You actually take time to pray for each other for whatever healing needs would be present. It's great to have the parish priest come, if he's able, and do the talk on the Church because there's a lot of richness within the Catholic Church that can be addressed.

CRO: It seems like they're focused on the larger body. How about ongoing involvement? Is there anything beyond the weekend which people are given an opportunity to attend or participate in?

MARGENE: The intent is that they be integrated into the parish. So you look for other opportunities for a prayer meeting or other small groups. In some parishes, people find that participants come away from Alpha and are hungry for more of God. They want more of the Holy Spirit; they want to pray together. They want to really connect. They want to really see God at work. And so it's important to think about what will be done afterward.

CRO: How large a team is needed for Alpha?

MARGENE: It takes a number of people. Someone is needed to be an administrative go-getter who is able to do a lot of the behind the scenes work: getting information ready for the bulletin, getting brochures out, planning things. An administratively gifted person is needed to head things up. Plenty of people are needed to be small group helpers and leaders. If anyone is thinking about doing a course, I would encourage them to attend the conference, if possible, and take the training. You need a task force to look at food preparation, setting up tables, supervising child care, as well as the cleaning up.

CRO: What would the total number be?

MARGENE: It all depends upon the size of the course. If you have 10 people, you could get by with having 4-5 helpers. If you have a course of 30 participants, you need about 15 people.

CRO: Would somebody feel adequate to offer the course having gone through a training weekend?

MARGENE: Yes, training for two days.

CRO: Is it better that someone involved in offering the course have gone through the process itself?

MARGENE: I think it's crucial to have gone to a conference. The conference is where you can get the most training. From there I would suggest attending a "sister parish." There are a lot of Lutheran churches running courses in our area. Find another course running in the area and sit in on one night. I don't think you need to go through the whole course. You just need to go to one night and get a feel for how the night flows.

CRO: What else do you suggest?

MARGENE: Just encouraging people to attend the conference. Come to the conference, and find out if it is something you would want to see in your parish. The next conference is July 22-23 at Hosanna Lutheran Church in Lakeville. That's a Monday and Tuesday.

CRO: Cost is an issue that we probably ought to touch on. I don't think it's something that's going to be overriding, but people are interested in knowing what's involved.

MARGENE: The conference registration cost is \$99 if you just come on your own. If you're a partnering church or a partnering parish, it would cost \$49 per person.

CRO: How does a partnering parish come about?

MARGENE: I could be contacted. I would send some information. It's \$250 to be a partnering parish. We use that money towards ads that we take out ever fall. The ads show a unity of all the different churches in our region that put on the course, and they list the courses that are starting in September.

CRO: So a partnering parish means that it's a co-sponsor?

MARGENE: Yes.

CRO: Could you tell me what the clergy have to say about Alpha?

MARGENE: One Bishop has said, "We want to evangelize, but we don't seem to have found the right method. I think the Alpha course easily offers the best method invented so far. Wise and successful, Alpha, I think, answers the questions that people are asking today. It is user-friendly. It is not confrontational. It is presented in everyday language. It is full of excellent stories and illustrations and the whole thing becomes fun. It is compelling and no one feels pressured."

CRO: How do you promote the course? You mentioned it's basically for someone who is unchurched and has never developed a relationship with God. How do you make that target group aware?

MARGENE: Often the first few times that a parish offers Alpha, the majority of people who will be coming through the course are just curious. Hopefully they'll have a positive experience even though they've been longtime church attendees. And even those who have been longtime church attendees can experience renewal in their own faith. Their own spiritual life may have become dry and hard like a sponge. The Holy Spirit fills them in a fresh way. This happens a lot.

CRO: A lot of people who attend church don't necessarily have a relationship with God.

MARGENE: Right. They can become the target audience for the first couple of programs. Then they begin to look at their friends and family and people with whom they work. It's basically friends being friends; word of mouth is the most effective way that we see the process grow. Then you can do things like mail letters to the people who are on the fringe or people who have an incidental relationship with the Church.

CRO: How can someone get more information?

MARGENE: Information can be obtained by calling 1-866-872-5742 or visiting the website at www.alphausa.org. The e-mail is alphaconferences@aol.com.

By publishing this interview, we hope to make people who are interested in the course more aware of what is involved in training for, and sponsoring, a course. Locally, an Alpha conference will be at Hosanna Lutheran Church in Lakeville on July 22-23.

Announcements

- **PENTECOST!** You are invited to attend the All-City Pentecost Mass at 5:30pm on Saturday evening, May 18th at the Church of St. Paul, Ham Lake. If you have never attended a charismatic Mass before, this is a wonderful opportunity to experience lively praise and worship as we celebrate the birthday of the Church. Need directions? Call 763-757-6910 or the Renewal Office.
- **“HOLY AND EMPOWERED: GOD’S VISION FOR YOU”** – Our annual conference this year will provide a time to be refreshed, renewed, and inspired to live a holy life, moving in the power of the Holy Spirit. Featured speakers are Mother Nadine Brown of the Intercessors of the Lamb in Omaha, and Sister Frances Clare, SSND. We are also planning many workshop sessions for you to choose from to hear how the Holy Spirit moves, guides and directs the lives of ordinary people. Mark your calendars for **August 23-24** and watch for more information in the upcoming weeks!
- **Good News, Bad News** – The good news is that we are continuing to plan events and assist individuals and parishes as they seek to encounter the living Christ through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Every day requests come in for prayer, location of healing masses, help with Life in the Spirit Seminars, and general information. The bad news is that our finances are very low. The Renewal Office needs your help. We receive no funding other than individual donations. Please prayerfully consider making a donation today. We thank you and may God bless you.

Upcoming Events

HEALING MASSES

May 20 - Monday - St. Therese Church, St. Paul - 7:30 p.m. in their lower chapel (below the Church) – Contact: Sr. Mary Anne 651-690-1501.

June 4 - Tuesday - St. Peter's, No. St. Paul - 7:30 p.m. Contact: Bob O'Connor at 651-777-4406 for more information.

June 17 - Monday - St. Therese Church, St. Paul - 7:30 p.m. in their lower chapel (below the Church) – Contact: Sr. Mary Anne 651-690-1501.

July 2 - Tuesday - St. Peter's, No. St. Paul - 7:30 p.m. Contact: Bob O'Connor at 651-777-4406 for more information.

OTHER EVENTS

May 11 - (2nd Sat. of each month) - Intercessory Prayer Gathering – St. Raphael's Church (in conference room) 9-11 a.m. - Pat & Joan Vogel 763-544-9416.

May 11-15 - Fr. Bill McCarthy presents “A Personal Relationship with Jesus” – St. Benedict's Church – Duluth, MN. Call: 218-724-4828

May 18 - All-City Pentecost Mass – Saturday evening, 5:30 pm – Church of St. Paul, Ham Lake.

June 28-30 – Steubenville North – Minneapolis, MN

July 13 – Saturday – Prayer Group Leaders' Gathering
Watch for more information.

August 23-24 - “Holy and Empowered: God's Vision for You” - Annual Catholic Charismatic Regional Conference – to be held at St. Bonaventure Church, Bloomington, MN (Mother Nadine Brown of the Intercessors of the Lamb in Omaha Sister Frances Clare, SSND)