

ALPHA NEW ENGLAND

Staff Biographies

WILLARD COOK

Director, Alpha New England

Willard and his wife Sally come to the New England area from the big skies and open spaces of northern Wyoming. Sally was born and raised in Cody, which is one of the gateway towns to Yellowstone National Park; Willard was raised in Sheridan, in the eastern part of the state near the Big Horn Mountains. Upon graduating from Dartmouth College and Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management, Willard served in Vietnam. He spent some time in Washington, D.C., where he met Sally. After they were married, Willard brought his bride back to Sheridan where they lived, worked, worshipped and raised their family of two daughters near the foothills of Willard's beloved Big Horn Mountains.

Willard's first career was as Sheridan's Ford, Lincoln-Mercury dealer--a family owned business which he shepherded in partnership with his father, and then on his own for 30 years before selling the dealership in 1998. With an empty nest and an exciting new freedom to contemplate, Willard and Sally decided to spend the winter of 2000 - 2001 in Marblehead, MA, to avail themselves of the culture of Boston--Sally's affinity for music and the arts having been a defining factor in her life in Sheridan for many years. The decision proved to be a good one. The Boston Symphony Orchestra, the museums, and the many suburban music offerings were just a few of the delights they found, and their relative proximity to New York City allowed them to attend the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera as well. The many and varied handball games available to Willard throughout metro Boston, and the excellent teaching and warm community provided by Christ Church, Hamilton, MA, simply made their experience all the better.

The result of Willard and Sally's experiences during this transitional year was that the summer of 2001 was a critical decision making time for them. After much thought and prayer, they decided to sell their home in Wyoming, and relocate to Boston's North Shore.

Upon their return to Boston in November of 2001, the de facto Alpha New England Board of Directors approached Willard to become the first Director of Alpha New England. The timing was perfect for both Willard and Alpha. The Lord had clearly moved the Cooks to the Boston area, and into the circle of Alpha New England.

Willard finds working with Alpha to be an invigorating endeavor. He appreciates the people, the course, and the blessings of the Lord on a daily basis. He wants to be of service in any way he can to those running Alpha, or those curious about it.

DICK KIERNAN

Director of Field Ministries, Alpha New England

Alpha New England is delighted to have Dick Kiernan serve the many Alpha churches of New England. Dick has lived and worked in New Hampshire since the early 1980s. He received his B.A. in English Teaching and MAT in Education from the University of New Hampshire, and then worked as a teacher and assistant principal for seven years in New Hampshire schools. In 1988, he departed for Steubenville, Ohio, where he obtained an M.A. in Theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville. Upon obtaining his Master's degree, Dick returned to Manchester, NH, where he served as the Associate Director of Spiritual Renewal Services, Diocese of Manchester, for 13 years before taking on his current role as Director of Field Operations for Alpha New England.

Dick was (and is!) a teacher and has enjoyed teaching English, theology, and Language Arts to a wide-range of students in elementary schools, high schools, and community colleges. In his spare time, he (because he is a soccer fanatic) coached soccer, as well as helped organize school devotions and extra-curricular student ministries. As the Associate Director of Spiritual Renewal Services, Dick coordinated the Office of Evangelization, edited the evangelical column for the Diocesan newspaper, served as spiritual advisor to the Catholic Young Adult ministry and the Crown NH ministry, chaired the New England Catholic Men's Conference, coordinated interdenominational fellowships of pastors' and couples' retreats, and led Alpha groups in NH. He also served as the Northern New England representative to the National Committee of Charismatic Renewal (NSC) and was the Catholic Coordinator of the New Hampshire March for Jesus.

Dick has published several guides in the areas of leadership training and spiritual direction, including "Men of St. Joseph Manual", "Men of St. Joseph Pilgrim's Guide," "Come Follow Me" spiritual leadership training, and several articles for "Tidings," the newspaper for the Diocese of Manchester. He has developed specialized Alpha for Catholics guides.

Dick's passion for building unity among evangelicals and Catholics is evidenced by speaking about this unity at conferences, and promoting and practicing it wherever he travels. Dick lives in Bedford and has five children: Theresa, Richie, Bethany, John and Christopher.

LISA OELERICH

Alpha New England, Regional Director, Metro Boston

Lisa was first introduced to Alpha when she attended the course as a guest in 2001. Having had a long series of negative experiences with "religious people", she took, what seemed to her to be a huge risk, and attended the course. She realized, for the first time in her life, she had found a safe environment to ask questions about faith. She fell in love with Jesus; and as a result, became passionate about working to provide safe places for others to come with their questions.

Lisa feels privileged to serve with her pastors and teammates at Grace Chapel, Lexington, MA. Over the years, she has seen Alpha consistently provide a safe and loving environment for people from all different cultures and backgrounds to explore Christianity.

A few years ago, after the untimely death of a young friend, Lisa was compelled to search for new ways to reach more people with the Gospel. In August 2007, the Lord called her to serve on staff with Alpha New England. Lisa raises her own financial support to assist and equip churches and leaders.

Lisa and her husband David live in New Hampshire. She has two sons, Neil and Casey, and loves dining with friends, hiking, horseback riding, tennis, and relaxing on the beach.

Mark 2:16-18 (NIV), When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

TRENT SHEPPARD

Alpha New England, Director of Alpha on Campus

Trent Sheppard (M.A. Wheaton College) is a collegiate minister, teaching pastor and the author of *God on Campus: Sacred Causes and Global Effects* (IVP). He and his wife, Bronwyn (M.A. Clark University), together with their two kids, Miréa and Blaze, live and work in Boston. Most recently, Trent helped to lead Campus America, an initiative of the 24-7 Prayer movement that linked more than 400 colleges and universities in prayer from 2005 - 2010.

Before moving to Massachusetts, Trent spent eight years working with Youth With a Mission (YWAM) in the United Kingdom where he helped to lead a community called The Factory. Made up of an international team of young adults, The Factory was all about engaging with culture and society in Jesus-like witness, out of which emerged multiple training events, discipleship schools, collegiate outreaches and some long-term initiatives like EngageHIV.

Trent was introduced to Alpha during his years in the UK, when he helped to lead an Alpha course for the young people in his youth group at High Street Methodist Church in Harpenden, England in 1999. He's been a fan of Alpha ever since and is convinced it is one of God's timely gifts to the worldwide body of Christ.

Trent travels widely to speak with college students and others about what it means to follow Jesus. His journeys have taken him to 50+ nations. For more on Trent (who really likes it when his wife speaks Turkish), visit his IVP author's bio page or hear him teach at Wheaton College Chapel in Illinois or the Status Community in Florida.