



S C A T T E R E D

C H U R C H

SESSION OUTLINE

AN **ARISE AFRICA** PRAYER AND WORSHIP SESSION



SCATTERED CHURCH

Millions of Christians in Africa are on the run, literally fleeing for their lives, because of conflict and violence.

And thousands are killed every year – paying the highest price for their faith in Jesus.

Scattered Church is an opportunity to stand and gather as one with your persecuted family in sub-Saharan Africa. As you encounter the reality of persecution, we pray it will help you respond meaningfully in prayer, worship and action.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

DURING THE EXPERIENCE, YOUR CHURCH WILL:

- Be informed about what it's like to be a persecuted Christian in sub-Saharan Africa
- Pray and worship creatively with the African church
- Take action alongside Christians around the world and stand as a global family.

WHY STAND WITH THE CHURCH IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA?

Christians in the region are asking you to join them in prayer and support and stand with them in solidarity.

"Your prayers give us the grace to stand."

- Sulieman*, Christian leader, West Africa

In places like Nigeria, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and many others, persecution is spreading like wildfire. Christians are being targeted, attacked, kidnapped and murdered, and Christian villages and schools are being destroyed. Militant terrorist groups occupy 40% of Burkina Faso's territory, and in places like Nigeria, militants act with impunity.

Open Doors estimates 16.2 million Christians are displaced by violence and conflict, including persecution. They struggle to survive in makeshift camps. People are hungry, traumatised and losing hope. It's a humanitarian crisis on an enormous scale and the world is not talking about it. It's putting the future of the church at risk.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Read through some of the stories and background information, and watch Open Doors' short films about persecution in sub-Saharan Africa – you can find them at opendoorsuk.org/ariseafrica

Helpful video links (to watch and download):

- **Pastor Barnabas, Nigeria** (8 mins)
- **Pastor Barnabas, Nigeria** (3 mins)
- **Pastor Soré, Burkina Faso** (6 mins)

HOW TO RUN YOUR SCATTERED CHURCH SESSION

Choose your meeting location.

You might meet in your normal setting, but you could choose a location that's similar to the experience of the scattered church in Africa: millions live in makeshift, temporary shelters, so they also hold church gatherings in similar settings – perhaps consider meeting under canvas, or under the shade of trees.

As the sun sets and darkness falls, Christian communities across sub-Saharan Africa often hear news that extremists are on their way. You could meet around dusk or sunset or, if you're inside, turn the lights down low to mimic the fading light. Another option is to meet first thing in the morning to rise and contend in prayer as the sun comes up.

You might want to pick and choose from the ideas below, but roughly the session will last an hour, or longer if you add more worship in.

The key elements of the session are labelled as

KEY ELEMENT

Optional elements are labelled as

OPTIONAL

Throughout this guide, names marked with * have been changed for security reasons

SESSION OUTLINE

KEY ELEMENT

MEET PASTOR BARNABAS



Pastor Barnabas, from Nigeria

Imagine being suddenly forced to flee your home, leaving behind everything familiar – your belongings, community and the life you’ve built. Imagine people want to kill you – because you are a Christian.

The air is heavy with fear and uncertainty as you walk into an unknown future, unsure of whether you’ll find safety or shelter. The place you once felt secure now feels dangerous, and all you carry are the memories of a life interrupted. Displaced, you face the world as a stranger, longing for a sense of belonging and peace, and unsure if you will ever be able to go home again.

This is what 16.2 million Christian brothers and sisters are experiencing in sub-Saharan Africa right now... and as darkness falls again, they are particularly vulnerable.

One of these believers in Nigeria is a man called Pastor Barnabas...

Show the ‘Meet Pastor Barnabas’ film (you could use an outdoor projector if meeting outside). [See Helpful video links on p3](#) to watch or download Pastor Barnabas’s story – either the 8-minute or 3-minute version, or read the following text to share Pastor Barnabas’ story:

For the past six years, Pastor Barnabas has lived in a makeshift tent less than the size of a double mattress. He shares this space with his wife (Joy) and their children. He lives in a displacement camp in Benue State, northern Nigeria. And it won’t end anytime soon.

Pastor Barnabas and his family were forced to leave everything behind because of violence from Islamic extremists. They’ve been driven from their ancestral home, and their church has been destroyed. It’s not just him and his family. Pastor Barnabas is just one of 16.2 million Christians across Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa who have been displaced by conflict and violence.

Try to picture what 16.2 million people looks like. It’s the population of London, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool combined. Displaced, scared and fighting for survival.

Pastor Barnabas says: “It is not only in Nigeria these things are happening. They are happening in the whole of Africa. The news doesn’t care about it, politicians don’t talk about it, government don’t talk about it, global politics don’t talk about it. Nobody talks about it. Tell me: how would that make you feel? Being forgotten, being disregarded?”

As he walks through the makeshift camp, Pastor Barnabas points to the endless scene of plastic, cardboard hand-built tents. He says: “Each and every one you are seeing here, we are all Christians. We are displaced because of violence.”

Nigeria is the epicentre of violent persecution against Christians, and it’s spreading across the region like a wildfire. According to Open Doors’ World Watch List – which ranks the costliest places in the world to be a Christian – nine out of ten Christians killed for their faith last year were in sub-Saharan Africa.

“Millions of Christians are displaced in Africa. The news doesn’t care about it, politicians don’t talk about it, governments don’t talk about it, global politics don’t talk about it. Nobody talks about it.” – Pastor Barnabas, Nigeria

KEY ELEMENT

STAND IN SILENCE

Have a moment of silent prayer in response to watching the Pastor Barnabas film or hearing his story.

KEY ELEMENT

FLOOR MAT PRAYERS

Use gaffer tape or masking tape to mark out the size of Pastor Barnabas's living space: a 1.5m square. Encourage groups of seven-eight people to stand together in the marked-out spaces. If you're outdoors, encourage people to stand together in small groups.

This is the space Pastor Barnabas lives in with his wife Joy and their children. There are 16.2 million similar stories.

What if this were you? How would you feel? And how would you want people to pray for you? Use that to shape your prayers.

Pray for God's peace, presence and provision for Pastor Barnabas and his scattered church community.

KEY ELEMENT

A TIME OF WORSHIP & PRAYER

If you can, get hold of a large map of Africa, or make your own and highlight the countries that appear on the [Open Doors World Watch List](#).

We have a God who sees, who knows, who is right there in the fire of persecution – a God who is present with Pastor Barnabas and the millions of other Christians in Africa as the fire of persecution rages.

Hearing a story like Pastor Barnabas's can be overwhelming. Romans 8 reminds us that when we have no words the Holy Spirit 'intercedes for us through wordless groans' (Romans 8:26). We can also use the lyrics of worship songs to help us find the words to bring people, places and situations before God.

Let's have a moment of silence – lifting up prayers on behalf of scattered church communities, like Pastor Barnabas's, and those on the run in this very moment. Imagine the palpable anxiety and terror as Christians being hunted by extremists flee their

homes as the sun sets. Pray that these brothers and sisters will experience the proximity and peace of God in this very moment.

Worship:

Sing a few songs that declare who God is, His rule and reign, a God who is present and with us in suffering.

Prayer:

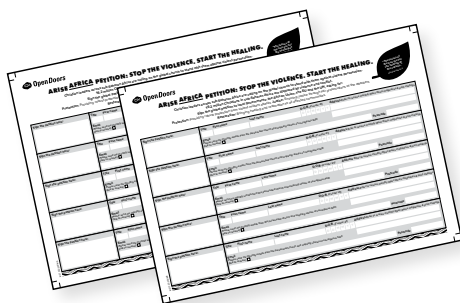
- Pray the words as you sing over Pastor Barnabas's camp, his church, over Nigeria and over the wider region
- Proclaim Jesus as Lord over Africa – we pray for more of heaven to come to earth, for God to deliver His people from evil, for more of Jesus's rule and reign to come. There are many Muslims encountering Jesus in dreams – pray for more. In northern Nigeria, these new believers are going on to share their faith in Jesus with others
- Pray for the church in sub-Saharan Africa to stand strong, to persevere, and grow in resilience, endurance, determination and faithfulness. Pray the church will shine brightly and share Jesus boldly. There are stories of kidnapped girls held in Boko Haram camps who are running prayer meetings and holding Bible studies – a reminder that God is at work, even when we can't see it or feel it
- Pray for the persecutors – members of Islamic extremist groups, like Boko Haram, in sub-Saharan Africa. Pray for them to encounter Jesus, just like Saul did on the way to Damascus, intent on destroying the fledgling church there (Acts 9:1-6)
- Pray for political leadership – for the will, strategy and resources to put an end to impunity for violent persecutors. Pray for justice to be done, and for people of integrity to be raised up in positions of influence in both government and the judiciary.

Do also check the [Open Doors website](#) and social media channels (@opendoorsuk) for the latest stories of persecution in Africa – so you can share and pray into the most urgent needs.

If you're up for being creative, you could get hold of small padlocks and keys to represent the millions displaced and those held in captivity. During worship, encourage people to place them on the countries where violent persecution is most extreme. Make this action a physical prayer as you contend for the church in Africa.

KEY ELEMENT

STOP THE VIOLENCE. START THE HEALING.



ADD YOUR VOICE: SIGN THE ARISE AFRICA PETITION

We'd love you to wrap up your *Scattered Church* session by signing the *Arise Africa* petition. **Physical petition sheets are included at the end of this document** as well as a large QR code. Print them off and pass around at the end of the session.

More petition sheets can also be **downloaded from our website**. Alternatively, you can **sign the petition online**.



Prepare some worship music to play in the background as you sign the petition.

Pastor Barnabas says: "It is not only in Nigeria these things are happening. They are happening in the whole of Africa. The news doesn't care about it, politicians don't talk about it, governments don't talk about it, global politics don't talk about it. Nobody talks about it. Tell me: how would that make you feel? Being forgotten, being disregarded?"

Nobody is talking about the violent persecution being experienced by our church family in sub-Saharan Africa. But we can. As we gather here for the scattered church, there is something we can do: we can make our voices heard on their behalf.

The African church is asking us to stand with them, along with Open Doors partners and church leaders, and add our voices to the Arise Africa petition.

Our brothers and sisters in sub-Saharan Africa are pleading with the international community

to intervene. The petition calls upon the global community, state actors and governments to acknowledge what is happening to the church in Africa and to seek justice, protection and restoration. The petition is intended to be taken, in 2026, to the prime minister and the UK government, the EU, the United Nations and the African Union.

KEY ELEMENT

FINAL SONG AND PRAYER

At the trauma centre run by Open Doors partners in northern Nigeria, the trauma workshops often end with participants taking their pain to the cross and laying their heart wounds before Jesus. They then sing the old hymn, 'I have decided to follow Jesus'.

Pray this song over the church in Nigeria and the wider region – and also for yourselves as a prayer of renewed commitment to follow Jesus, no matter the cost, learning from your persecuted family.

Then finish with a prayer from Pastor Barnabas:

*Holy Spirit,
come upon us and do Your will.
Take over our lives.
Our eyes, our hope, our confidence is in You.
Amen.*

EXTRAS

If you wish to make the session longer, then these are some optional additions that you can use to expand and diversify the *Scattered Church* session:

OPTIONAL

SHARE MANGA'S STORY



Manga, from Nigeria

Manga's life changed forever the night Boko Haram extremists – armed with machetes – burst into his family home in northern Nigeria. Tragically, his father was murdered. Manga and his brothers survived, but only just.

As the Boko Haram blade savagely cut Manga's body, he prayed the words of Psalm 118:17: "I will not die but live", and cried out the Lord's Prayer.

Miraculously in that moment, Manga no longer felt pain – he knew Jesus was right there. He literally felt the hand of God on his neck. "Then something surprising happened," he remembers. "The pain I assumed I'd feel when I'm being slaughtered was not there. And I fell unconscious. The fact I survived is a miracle."

Today, Manga bears the scars of that ordeal – they cover his neck and shoulders. Incredibly, rather than feel ashamed or angry because of his scars, he takes pride in them: "At first, I was shy of these scars. But now they're evidence of the existence of God."

Violent persecution awakened Manga's faith. Before that night when Boko Haram came to his home, Manga wasn't really serious about Jesus; he

only went to church because his mum, Amina, asked him to. He now says: "I want to live to make Jesus famous – I was saved for a purpose."

The cost of faith is real. Manga lost his dad and his home. He can no longer live with his mum and siblings – he lives in hiding hours away from his family, isolated, displaced, going from job to job. Today, Manga remains on Boko Haram's hit list.

◀ Take a moment to share some Bible verses, like Manga did – the psalms are a good place to start, but feel free to share other scriptures. Use them as prayers for those who, at this very moment, are being targeted and attacked; those grieving the loss of a family member or a close friend; those who have lost everything and are living far away from home. Speak the words of Scripture over our brothers and sisters, and situations in Africa.

You could end by saying the Lord's Prayer together, line by line, as Manga did:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be Your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are Yours
now and for ever.
Amen.*

OPTIONAL

SING FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T

There's a story of a woman who attended a trauma programme run by Open Doors partners in northern Nigeria.

During worship, Rebecca couldn't sing or dance. Her grief was so deep and so painful. She saw militants murder her husband and a few months later, they returned; this time, they murdered her son.

Tragically, Rebecca's story is far from unique. Among the many thousands of stories, the pain and trauma experienced by women like her often go unnoticed.

For days, Rebecca seemed to attend the meetings only as a passive observer. No one tried to force her to contribute.

"The breakthrough came during an art therapy class," remembers Tirham one of the local Open Doors partners. "We told them to draw a picture that represented their struggles. In small groups, they worked away. Rebecca drew a picture of a coffin and a crying face. It was unbelievably sad."*

The women all came together to show and talk about what they had painted and drawn. After two days in complete silence, Rebecca started to talk about her painting. "Then we told the women to take their paintings and place them at the foot of a cross we had erected," says Tirham. "Rebecca laid her painting there. Later, she said to me, 'The moment I laid my picture at the cross, a lightness of heart came over me – I rediscovered my peace.'"

Slowly, she returned to life. It was as if the acknowledgement and validation of her pain had awoken something in her, as though placing her picture at the foot of the cross had enabled herself to identify with Jesus, a man of sorrows, acquainted with our grief. Her voice, only a whisper to begin with, started to sing the worship songs.

Something else happened: her foot started tapping along to the music. Finally, the following morning, Rebecca stood up and started dancing. It was a beautiful moment.

Lead into a time of worship – sing two or more songs on behalf of those who can't. Don't forget to move: stand, shuffle, stamp your feet and sing!

And pray:

- For God to continue His healing in believers like Rebecca who have been traumatised by violence and persecution
- For the work of Open Doors partners on the ground running trauma programmes and seeking to expand this vital work.

Next steps...

Thank you for running *Scattered Church*. Your prayers and petitions are so vital. Thank you, and please keep following the journey of the *Arise Africa* campaign over the next year.

You can also participate in *Church on the Run* - a fundraising sponsored challenge. Get moving as a church family to raise funds for brothers and sisters in Africa, forced to run for their lives.

If you are up for fundraising for your scattered church family request a *Church on the Run* pack email contact@opendoorsuk.org or call 01993 460015.



OpenDoors

ARISE AFRICA PETITION: STOP THE VIOLENCE. START THE HEALING.

Christian leaders across sub-Saharan Africa are calling on the global church to stand with them against violent persecution. 16.2 million Christians in sub-Saharan Africa are displaced by violence and conflict.

Share the global petition for local governments, the African Union, the EU and the UN, asking for:

- Protection:** Providing robust protection from violent militant attacks
- Justice:** Ensuring justice through fair prosecutions of the attackers
- Restoration:** Bringing healing and restoration to all affected communities.



Sign the petition here:	<table><tr><td>Title</td><td>First name</td><td>Last name</td><td colspan="3">D.O.B. (if under 21)</td><td>Address <input type="checkbox"/> Please send monthly Open Doors magazines & print mailings, and a free Arise Africa wristband to remind me to pray (tick to receive)</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>D</td><td>D</td><td>M</td><td>Y</td><td></td></tr><tr><td colspan="7">Email <input type="checkbox"/> Please send me monthly emails about the persecuted church (tick to receive)</td><td>Postcode</td></tr></table>	Title	First name	Last name	D.O.B. (if under 21)			Address <input type="checkbox"/> Please send monthly Open Doors magazines & print mailings, and a free Arise Africa wristband to remind me to pray (tick to receive)				D	D	M	Y		Email <input type="checkbox"/> Please send me monthly emails about the persecuted church (tick to receive)							Postcode
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Return this petition to FREEPOST OPEN DOORS UK & IRELAND. You can download and print more petition sheets at opendoorsuk.org/ariseafrica

The petition will be open until 2026 - but please do send the gathered signatures as soon as you can, so we can build momentum and raise enough signatures to take to influential decision-makers.

To view our privacy policy visit opendoorsuk.org/privacy

STOP THE VIOLENCE.
START THE HEALING.



ADD YOUR VOICE:
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