

# AMONG THE ASHES

LEARNING LAMENT WITH THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

What do you do when it all falls apart?

What do you do when everything gets taken away; when all that you have worked  
so hard to build gets shut down?

Or, worse, becomes nothing more than a load of ruins and a handful of ash?



Ron Boyd-Macmillan introduces the four movements of lament

**Among the Ashes is a new film and prayer resource for churches from Open Doors. Filmed in an abandoned church in South Wales, this beautiful, evocative and inspiring film combines biblical reflection with stories from the persecuted church, to explore how the biblical principle of lament can bring us hope and comfort, even in the darkest situations.**

Suffering and loss is something that all of us will share at some point in our lives. We might be grieving for loved ones or enduring ill-health. We have lost jobs or seen cherished hopes dashed. Whatever the specific situation, we will all, at some point, be among the ashes.

But the message of this film is that we are not there alone.

No-one wants to live among the ashes. Yet that is where we can truly encounter God in a new and powerful way.

## AMONG THE ASHES: Outline for a Time of Prayer

This outline provides a simple framework for a time of prayer using [the film](#). You can use this outline to reflect, either individually or with others, on some of the issues that Ron raises in the film.

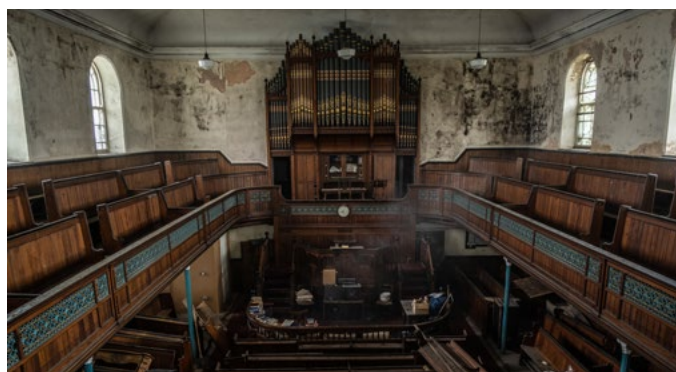
In the film, Ron Boyd-Macmillan - who has worked with Open Doors for over 35 years - introduces the four movements of lament: presence, honesty, promise and reply. This resource uses those four movements as themes to help us pray for Christians who are among the ashes: whether in the persecuted church, or closer to home among our friends, family and fellow Christians.

You can, of course, use as much or as little of this outline as you like, or adapt it to your own needs. It is designed for use online, or as a physical event, and it is suitable for many different church contexts:

- during your church service (online or in-person)
- your prayer meetings
- your small group
- a special event

However you use the film, we pray it will connect your church with the persecuted church – and that you will be encouraged by the film's message of hope and love.

***PLEASE NOTE: For some of these prayer exercises, people will need a candle and matches. It goes without saying that we need to ask everyone to take care when using these!***



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## 1 WELCOME

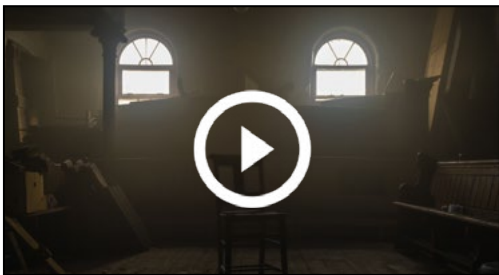
We are gathering together to pray for anyone who is among the ashes at this time.  
We are going to be praying with each other for all those who are encountering suffering or loss.  
We are going to be thinking about persecuted Christians who live out the faith in some of the hardest places in the world to be a Christian.  
But we are also going to be thinking about our own situation.  
Perhaps we too are sitting among the ashes. Or perhaps we know friends and family who are struggling with loss.  
Together we are going to seek the presence of God.

After welcoming people have a short time of silence.

**READ: Psalm 6:1-10**

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## 2 WATCH



Watch the film 'Among the Ashes'

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## 3 PRESENCE

**ACTION:** Ask people to light a candle, using a match, but not to discard the match when they've blown it out – we will use the burned-out match later.

A reminder: wherever you are, whatever you are going through, God is present.

Look at the candle. Let the flame remind you of God's presence. Perhaps you can feel heat.

Perhaps you are in the dark and it is giving light.  
Perhaps it is just beautiful to look at.

**READ: Psalm 6:1-2**

*"LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint; heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony."* (Psalm 6:1-2)

**PRAY:**

- We begin praying for Christians around the world who need to experience the presence of God.
  - Pray for persecuted Christians: that they would experience the presence of God, no matter where they are.
  - In particular at this time, pray for Christians in India like Rohan. India is seeing an upsurge in persecution and anti-Christian violence.
  - You can encourage people to contribute prayers, or you can find written prayers and prayer points on our prayer for India page.
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## 4 HONESTY

**ACTION:** Blow the candle out.

Sometimes there are times in our lives when things go dark, when they go up in smoke, when, in the psalmist's words, things 'fail because of my foes'. In such times we don't have to pretend.

**READ: Psalm 6:6-7**

*"I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes."* (Psalm 6:6-7)

**PRAY:**

### 1. Tell God how you are feeling

Privately and in quiet, tell God how you feel right now. Where is the light? Where is the darkness? If it helps, write down your thoughts - write a letter to God.

## 2. Tell God about the 'foes' you are facing

As Christians, our 'foes' are not people whom we want to destroy. But perhaps there are people whom you need to forgive, but who, in all honesty, you do not feel like forgiving.

Or, maybe your foes are not people at all, but feelings: anxiety, fear, shame.

Perhaps your foes are things that you have done and for which you need to ask forgiveness. (Perhaps you do not feel any of this at all. In which case, praise the Lord!)

What can you pray in this situation? Can you pray a blessing on people who have hurt you? Can you pray for protection from feelings which harm you? Can you bring before our loving God the things for which you know you need forgiveness?

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## 5 PROMISES

**ACTION:** Using the charred end of the burned-out match, draw a cross on one of your hands.

Jesus promises us forgiveness. He promises us His presence. We have the promises of God - in writing.

**READ:** Psalm 6:3-4

*"My soul is in deep anguish. How long, LORD, how long? Turn, LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love."* (Psalm 6:3-4)

**PRAY:**

- Can you bring to mind promises which God has given which might help when you are among the ashes?
- Think back on your own 'God experience'. Where do you see the evidence of God's faithfulness? Thank God for your story.

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## 6 REPLY

**ACTION:** Re-light the candle.

We wait among the ashes with faith that God is present, active in all areas of our lives. His light has not gone out. What is His reply to us?

**READ:** Psalm 6:8-9

*"Away from me, all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my weeping. The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer."* (Psalm 6:8-9)

**PRAY:**

**Ask God for a reply.** Not, necessarily, an explanation – as Ron says in the film – but some kind of reply. Because that can change everything. You may not get a reply right now. You may have to sit among the ashes for a time to come. But God is sitting with you. A reply will come.

**Ask God to show you how to be the reply.**

Pray also for opportunities to be the reply for others. We are 'God's thunderbolts'. Ask God to show you how you can bring help to others.

*"LORD, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God."* (Psalm 38:15)

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## 7 CONCLUSION

We hope that this resource brings comfort and solace, wherever you find yourself at the moment.

In the meantime, please continue to pray with the persecuted church.

At [opendoorsuk.org](http://opendoorsuk.org) you will find more about praying with the persecuted church, and how your support makes a difference to those around the world who find themselves among the ashes.