

## Desmond Tutu

Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, Nobel Peace Laureate and Chair of The Elders; a veteran anti-apartheid activist and peace campaigner widely regarded as 'South Africa's moral conscience'.

- Founding member and Chair of The Elders
- Nobel Peace Laureate 1984
- Chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

*"Despite all of the ghastliness in the world, human beings are made for goodness. The ones that are held in high regard are not militarily powerful, nor even economically prosperous. They have a commitment to try and make the world a better place."*

## Work with The Elders

Known affectionately as 'Arch' by his fellow Elders, Desmond Tutu helped bring the group together in 2007 and serves as its much-loved Chair, constantly challenging the group to fulfil its mission – chiding his fellow Elders if necessary – always with great humour and warmth.

One of the world's best known advocates for forgiveness and reconciliation, Archbishop Tutu has visited [Cyprus](#) four times with The Elders to promote peace and features in The Elders' film [Cyprus: Digging the Past in Search of the Future](#). In late April 2011, he joined his fellow Elders Kofi Annan and Mary Robinson in [Côte d'Ivoire](#) to encourage national reconciliation following months of post-election violence. Reflecting on his experience as Chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he urged the new President to ensure the process is independent, inclusive and not rushed.

Always making it a priority to hear from ordinary people affected by conflict, Archbishop Tutu was part of The Elders' August 2009 delegation to Israel and the West Bank to support [Middle East peace](#), where he and his fellow Elders met diverse groups of Israelis and Palestinians. He also joined The Elders' first mission in response to Darfur's humanitarian tragedy, travelling to [Sudan](#) in October 2007 to meet political leaders, civil society and internally displaced persons.

He travelled to Ethiopia with The Elders in June 2011 to convene an international meeting of experts and activists tackling the harmful traditional practice of [child marriage](#). "We want to

use our collective clout, as Elders,” he told delegates, “to lift up something that has been ignored by the world.”

### **Anti-apartheid archbishop**

Desmond Mpilo Tutu began his career as a high school teacher but turned to theology after the 1953 Bantu Education Act enforced racial segregation in all educational institutions. He was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1960, becoming the first black Anglican Dean of Johannesburg in 1975 and the first black General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches four years later. An outspoken critic of the apartheid government, he insisted that racial segregation was against God’s will. He soon became well-known internationally for his commitment to non-violence and for his support for economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa.

He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his work in the struggle against apartheid. In 1986 he was elected Archbishop of Cape Town, the highest position in the Anglican Church in South Africa. Widely regarded as 'South Africa's moral conscience', he continued to speak out against the apartheid regime and organised many peaceful demonstrations with thousands marching beside him.

### **Truth and reconciliation**

In 1994, after the end of apartheid and the election of Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa, Tutu was appointed Chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate apartheid-era crimes. The model he established, based on truth as a foundation for forgiveness and reconciliation, was central to healing South Africa's divided society. He says, “Without forgiveness there can be no future for a relationship between individuals or within and between nations.”

Tutu retired as Chair of the Commission in 1998 and has since shared his experience and advice with those undertaking their own truth and reconciliation processes in post-conflict societies, from Northern Ireland to the Solomon Islands.

### **Advocate for peace and justice**

Archbishop Tutu remains a passionate critic of injustice. Despite announcing his retirement from public life in 2010, he continues to stand up for those who are poor and oppressed, to raise awareness of global crises such as the AIDS pandemic and climate change, and to advance peace and reconciliation worldwide.

Archbishop Tutu's ability to convey difficult messages with clarity, compassion and conviviality make him one of the most loved and respected activists of our time. As his great friend Nelson Mandela said of Tutu, he is “sometimes strident, often tender, never afraid and seldom without humour.”