

## Desmond Tutu

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

- Founding member and Chair of The Elders 2007-2013
- 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 served as its much-loved Chair until May 2013.

One of the world's best known advocates for peace and reconciliation, Archbishop Tutu has travelled to [Cyprus](#) with the Elders several times to encourage reconciliation between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities; to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories to promote a just and secure [Middle East peace](#); to [Côte d'Ivoire](#), where the Elders encouraged national reconciliation following the post-election violence of early 2011; and to [Sudan and South Sudan](#) to highlight humanitarian needs and the importance of dialogue between political leaders.

A constant champion of youth empowerment, Archbishop Tutu took part in [Elders+Youngers](#), an intergenerational dialogue on sustainable development around the Rio+20 summit in June 2012. He has also travelled to Ethiopia with The Elders in June 2011, and to India in February 2012, to support communities tackling the harmful traditional practice of [child marriage](#). "We want to use our collective clout, as Elders," he said, "to lift up something that has been ignored by the world."

In January 2014, he joined The Elders visit to [Iran](#), aiming to encourage dialogue between Iran and the international community and promote peaceful solutions to conflict and sectarian divisions in the region. The Elders met with key Iranian figures and discussed Iran's role in the

easing of regional tensions, the spread of extremist violence internationally, issues of human rights and the Syrian crisis.

He stepped down as Chair in May 2013, noting that "As Elders we should always oppose Presidents for Life." However, he remains an Honorary Elder.

### **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. Alongside his wife, Leah, Archbishop Tutu continues to work through the [Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation](#) with the objective of promoting

peace building through conflict resolution, fostering reconciliation and to cultivate accountable servant leadership.

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."