

One of the great and abiding images of the second half of the 20th century was Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela dancing in the courtroom at the end of the closing session of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Cape Town. Nelson Mandela asked his friend Desmond Tutu to chair the Commission.

It was a bold and creative way of helping a nation divided brutally between black and white learn to live in glorious technicolour by facing up to the horrors of its past and by putting the Christian imperative for forgiveness alongside the need for truth as the only way of achieving reconciliation.

And Desmond Tutu was asked to chair it because this incredibly joyful little disciple of Jesus Christ was one of the few people in South Africa other than Nelson Mandela himself, who could unite the nation and carry the trust of everyone.

In this respect, he was a giant.

The world itself feels a little smaller without him. His expansive vision of how the Christian faith shapes the whole of life has touched many hearts and changed many lives. The Anglican church in particular gives thanks for one of its greatest saints. But Christian people everywhere, and all people of goodwill, will today be mourning the loss of someone who showed the world what following Jesus looks like and where it leads.

Our prayers today are particularly with his family and with our sisters and brothers in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. When I go to my chapel this morning to celebrate the Eucharist on this, Saint Stephen's day, I may dance a little jig in thankful memory of this wonderful human being. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofyork.org/news/latest-news/statement-archbishop-york-death-archbishop-desmond-tutu>