

In memory of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (7 October 1931 - 26 December 2021)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu died on 26th December 2021. Tributes were paid all over the world to this renowned spokesperson for peace and justice. The members of Liverpool Hope's Centre for War & Peace Studies were delighted when in 2007 Archbishop Tutu agreed to his name being given to the Centre. The Archbishop was ordained a priest in 1961 and in 1976 was appointed Bishop of Lesotho and General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. In the years that followed he became a determined opponent of apartheid, sometimes angering members of his own church by his support for international sanctions against South Africa. However, even while pursuing the agenda of justice for black South Africans, Tutu remained deeply opposed to violence, criticising the exiled ANC in Zambia for its use. In 1984, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1986, he was elected to the highest Anglican post in South Africa as Archbishop of Cape Town. As the approaching end of the apartheid regime became increasingly apparent, Tutu became concerned for reconciliation, being aware that struggles for liberation which became successful too often heralded a period of violence. Thus it seemed highly appropriate that in 1995, Mandela should offer him the post of Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which he accepted. The aim of the Commission was to effect reconciliation by uncovering human rights abuses, regardless of who had committed them. The Commission delivered its final five-volume report to Mandela in November 1998. The report included condemnation of some of the activities of the ANC. In response to criticism he stated, 'I have struggled against a tyranny. I did not do this in order to substitute another.'

In June 2007, Archbishop Tutu came to Liverpool Hope University to officially launch the Centre which now bore his name. In the words of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Gerald Pillay, "His great work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa is the reason why we asked Archbishop Tutu if he would allow us to use his name for the Centre." He delivered the Centre's Annual Civic Lecture, which was entitled 'Ours is a Moral Universe', at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King. He then came to the Hope Park Campus to formally open the university's new landmark building, the Gateway to Hope. It was observed that when he entered the reception area to the building, he walked past the dignitaries and over to the catering staff to speak with them.

The Centre is proud to bear the name of this man who stood not only for justice, but for peace and reconciliation between people within nations and between nations. He continued to do so after his retirement and to speak truth to power where he perceived injustice. He compared the policy of the government of Israel towards Palestinians to the apartheid regime he had lived through and in 2017 called for an end to the genocide of the Rohingya population of Burma in an open letter to Aung San Suu Kyi. His commitment to peace is summed up by his comments on the Iraq War, 'those that are going to be killed in Iraq are not collateral damage, they are human beings of flesh and blood... They are our sisters and brothers.'

Dr Terry Phillips

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