The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have joined leaders from across the Church of England, the Anglican Communion and other churches in paying tribute to Desmond Tutu the Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, who has died at the age of 90.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby described Archbishop Tutu as “a great warrior for justice who never stopped fighting – whether it was for those in his own country, for inclusivity in the South African Constitution, or for those suffering injustice around the world.”

He said: “The world is different because of this man.

“Archbishop Tutu was a prophet and priest, a man of words and action, one who embodied the hope and joy that were the foundations of his life.

“He was a man of extraordinary personal courage and bravery: when the police burst into Cape Town Cathedral, he defied them by dancing down the aisle.

“He was a man of enormous vision: seeing the possibilities for building the Rainbow Nation long before anyone else, except perhaps President Mandela.

“His vision and bravery were allied with a canny political sense and wisdom, enabling him to be a healer and apostle of peace while so many still saw wounds and war.”

Read the Archbishop of Canterbury’s tribute.

The Very Revd Rogers Govender, the Dean of Manchester, and Chair of the Church of England’s Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) tweeted: “RIP Tata ++Desmond Tutu.

“Father in God of South Africa and the world! Justice, peace, laughter and love for all.”
The Bishop of Dover, Rose Hudson-Wilkin said: “He was a giant of our time who lived out his faith prophetically - speaking truth to power of whatever colour.  

“He lived the message of the Gospel - love, forgiveness and compassion.”

She added: “I am honoured to have witnessed something of his life, his love and his resilience.

“In the African Caribbean tradition we say: ‘Sleep on beloved, sleep and take your rest, we love you more but Jesus loved you best...’”


“He has been an inspiration. May he rest in peace.”

And the Revd Canon Lusa Nsenga Ngoy, who was recently announced as the next Bishop of Willesden in north and west London, posted: “He lived, laughed, and loved with authenticity, integrity, and compassion.

“The apostle of reconciliation and Ubuntu has completed his labour of love.

“May he rest in power, and may we follow his example in the service of Christ, humanity, and creation.”
Lord Boateng, Chair of the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice, who worked with Archbishop Tutu both at the World Council of Churches and as High commissioner to South Africa, said: “A mighty tree has fallen’ is the traditional response in Africa, to the passing of such a great soul.

“Desmond Tutu was a towering figure of monumental moral authority whose contribution to the struggle for racial justice transcended his beloved South Africa, but embraced us all.

“Our responsibility is to carry on that fight in the name of Jesus whom he served so fearlessly, but always with humour and joy.

“Hamba Kahle dear Arch! Go Well.”

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said Archbishop Tutu had been asked to chair South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission because of his rare ability to bring people together and carry the trust of everyone.

“In this respect, he was a giant,” he said.

“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.”

- Read the Archbishop of York’s statement.
The Bishop of Chelmsford, Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani tweeted: “Mourning the loss of the late great Archbishop Desmond Tutu who lived equally the Christian call to forgiveness as well as to justice. He understood well the power of both. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.”

Meanwhile Nick Papadopulos, the Dean of Salisbury, where Archbishop Tutu was a Canon, wrote: “The whole community @SalisburyCath mourns our distinguished Sarum Canon Desmond Tutu, giving thanks for his long life & his exceptional & prophetic service of God. May he rest in peace & rise in glory”.

The Revd Dr Ellen Clark-King, Dean, King’s College London, where Desmond Tutu studied theology in the 1960s and later served as a Fellow, said: “His passion for justice, sense of wonder and joy and incredibly infectious laugh will live in our memories and inspire our own lives.”

Read tributes from King’s College London

The Bishop of Southwark, Christopher Chessun - the diocese where Desmond Tutu served his curacy in 1965 - said: “He was fearless in naming all injustice wherever it is found, particularly in helping to liberate South Africa from apartheid oppression and for the contribution he made in chairing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

“I pray his lifelong championing of truth and justice will continue to impact on Anglican identity and witness with renewed vigour following his death.”

Read the tribute from the Diocese of Southwark

Meanwhile the President of the Methodist Conference Revd Sonia Hicks said: “As a Black Christian, I grew up aware that the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu did not allow the presuppositions of other people define his own self identity and self worth, even under apartheid.

“That awareness fuelled my desire for a more just and inclusive world for all.

“I pray for those mourning his loss today and hope that his work for justice in South Africa and the world over continues to burn bright.”

Read tributes from the Methodist Church in Great Britain