

Tutu lauds Boesak's return from politics to ministry

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Archbishop Desmond Tutu has praised the decision by Allan Boesak, an antiapartheid icon and former president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, to quit politics and join “God’s party.”

“I cannot say how thrilled I am that Allan has followed his path and agreed to serve the people through God, rather than through political parties,” said Tutu, the former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, on November 3.

Tutu, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, said he had been nagging Boesak since the 1990s to heed the call of God, not as a politician but as a pastor with outstanding gifts of oratory. In the 1980s Tutu and Boesak were two of the most prominent church leaders fighting apartheid with their rousing sermons against injustice.

“Some may say that Allan, as a member of the human race, is not perfect. But few would argue that he is not perfectly equipped to inspire a new generation of active and involved citizens—as he did once before. Welcome back to God’s party,” said Tutu.

In December Boesak had joined the Congress of the People party, known as COPE, consisting mainly of breakaways from South Africa’s ruling African National Congress. At the time, Boesak said COPE must be the new vision for South Africans to build a new home for all.

After resigning from COPE, Boesak said that the party was characterized by faction fighting, strife, pitched battles for political supremacy and duplicity. The youth wing of COPE countered in turn that Boesak rarely attended party meetings or the Western Cape legislature, and he did not give 7 percent of his income to the party.

Boesak rose to prominence in the 1980s as a leader of the antiapartheid United Democratic Front, a front for the ANC, which was banned at the time. He was for a time also the chairman of the ANC in the Western Cape.

He served a jail term in 2000 after conviction for fraud and theft of donor funds, for which he maintains he was innocent and set up by the ANC. Boesak was readmitted to church ministry in 2005 after being pardoned by then president Thabo Mbeki.

“I had no desire to subject my family, myself or my calling to serve our people to these sorts of indignities and destructive politicking,” said Boesak on November 3. Two days later he added, “The contribution I hope to make will be from outside any party political structures, including those of the African National Congress.” - *Ecumenical News International*