

George O. Wood: Nelson Mandela Represented Christian Virtues

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela—the South African statesman, Nobel Peace Prize winner and the nation's first black president who became renowned for leading South Africa out of the bonds of apartheid—passed away Thursday. He was 95.

Mandela, often referred to as “Madiba” (his clan name) in South Africa, spent nearly three decades of his life as a political prisoner and was admired throughout the world for his passion to seek unity rather than revenge.

“Nelson Mandela represented the Christian virtues of love instead of hate, reconciliation instead of enmity, and forgiveness instead of bitterness,” says George O. Wood, Assemblies of God general superintendent.

“Unjustly imprisoned for 27 years, he stepped into national leadership of South Africa and brought healing and hope. We express our heartfelt condolences to the people of South Africa and also to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ of the International Assemblies of God and Assemblies of God of South Africa, led respectively by Dr. Gordon Lebelo and Dr. Peter Watt.”

Greg Johns, South Africa area director for AG World Missions, expressed condolences on behalf of the Assemblies of God USA to the faculty and staff of the Global School of Theology in Cape Town. Johns says that in many ways the school represents what Mandela stood for, as it's composed of every racial group—African, English, Afrikaner, Coloured (mixed races) and Indian, in addition to many international students.

“The feelings and thoughts expressed by all seemed to come

back to the difference one life can make if lived by the right principles and values,” Johns says. “They all loved Tata [Father] Mandela deeply—white and black alike.”

This Sunday has been declared a national day of prayer and reflection in South Africa by President Jacob Zuma. Zuma has encouraged all South Africans to gather in places of worship, conduct prayer services and reflect on the life of Mandela.

The humanitarian work Mandela was famed for will be carried on by his three organizations: the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund, the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Mandela Rhodes Foundation.

Mandela, who received the name “Nelson” from a preschool teacher, will be buried in a state funeral on Sunday, Dec. 15, in his ancestral hometown of Qunu in the Eastern Cape province.