
Church leaders pay tribute to Martin McGuinness, MLA

Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin

Like many people I was shocked before Christmas to hear about the serious illness of Martin McGuinness, and, despite our hopes and prayers for his recovery, today I am saddened to learn that he has died. My first thoughts are with his dear wife Bernie, his children, grandchildren, brothers and sister, and all his many friends and loved ones.

I will remember Martin as someone who chose personally to leave behind the path of violence and to walk instead along the more challenging path of peace and reconciliation. As a leader he was courageous and took risks in order to bring others with him, convincing them that goals

could be achieved by politics and persuasion.

He channelled his many gifts into creating and sustaining the peace process of which he was one of the key architects. I have no doubt that Martin's faith and relationship with God guided him along this journey. He was a man of prayer and I am personally grateful for his good wishes and encouragement to me, as a fellow Derry man, in my own vocation.

The story of conflict in Ireland has brought much pain and trauma and I thank God that in recent years we have preferred peace to the horror of violence and war. People like Martin McGuinness have made an immense contribution to sustaining peace by reaching out a hand of friendship and reconciliation and being prepared to model alternatives to dispute and division. Martin's personal warmth and open, friendly personality was able to melt away suspicion and help build trust with those coming from very different perspectives. Being grounded in love for his family, community and native city of Derry, he understood the importance of a peaceful, just and prosperous future for all. Martin was ambitious for peace. He knew that peace was worth striving for and was within reach in his life time.

A fitting legacy for Martin would be a redoubling of efforts on all our parts to find solutions to our current problems and continue along the journey to a shared future. May he rest in peace. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilis.

The Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke

I express my sincere sympathy to Martin McGuinness's wife, family and friends on the news of his death.

Martin McGuinness's adult life was in so many ways one of two very distinct halves, and most of us have great difficulty in connecting the two. That having been said (and it must be said), while recognising the hurt, fear and misery brought into hundreds of other lives in the first part of that life, we should also convey proper appreciation of the immense statesmanlike qualities that Martin McGuinness brought into the political life of Northern Ireland in recent years. He displayed both real courage and a genuine openness to those of different political viewpoints from his own.

Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar

Few public figures have made such a journey from violence to peace as Martin McGuinness and many people will acknowledge the contribution and commitment to the common good which he made in the latter part of his life. On behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, I extend our deepest sympathy to Mr. McGuinness' wife, Bernadette, his children, grandchildren and the wider family circle during their sad time of loss and assure them of our prayers.

The Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson

“I wish to express my sympathy on the death of Martin McGuinness to all members of his family and to those who hold him dear. I do so in recognition of his contribution to peace and to reconciliation as an integral part of the process of politics. Over a sustained period he committed himself in partnership with others to building a platform of peace in a broken world. Reconciliation changes individuals and it

changes lives because at its heart it is transformative of inherited and accumulated caricatures and wrongdoings. It is one of the signs of the Kingdom of God in our midst. God calls all to work for the furtherance of the Kingdom regardless of our human frailty. I further wish to recognise the courage he showed in enduring a most debilitating illness in the last months and to pray for comfort for his wife and family at this time.”

The Bishop of Derry, Donal McKeown

The death of Martin McGuinness, which was announced this morning, will affect many people in different ways.

Martin McGuinness played a uniquely significant role in the life of this society for almost fifty years.

Firstly my sympathies go to his wife Bernie and family. They have lost someone, who remained so loyal to and protective of them throughout his life. Secondly, for those who know him well, there will be a huge sense of personal loss.

Martin’s role in moving Northern Ireland from conflict to politics has been immense. Others will have more painful memories of how their lives

were affected. And I encourage everyone, when they reflect on Martin McGuinness, to be sensitive to how his death will be felt across this community.

I pray that, as a society, we will be able to reflect on the life and death of Martin McGuinness in ways that help to move us all forward. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilis.

The Bishop of Derry & Raphoe, Rt Rev Ken Good

I wish to express my condolences to the McGuinness family on the death of the former Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness.

There are many in this community who still find it difficult to come to terms with his past involvement in the IRA, and the pain inflicted by that organisation.

However, in recent years, Martin McGuinness dedicated himself to constitutional politics and to the peace process. With considerable charisma and a willingness to reach out to others, he proved himself an adept and courageous political leader. He challenged his

own community and others, taking undeniable risks for the greater good and developing relationships that would previously have been considered most unlikely.

Ultimately, of course, his death will be felt most sorely by his wife, Bernie; his children, Grainne, Fionnuala, Fiachra and Emmett; his grandchildren; and his brothers and sister. I offer them my deep sympathy at this time.

Peter Lynas, Northern Ireland director of the Evangelical Alliance

Mr Lynas commented:

“We are praying for the family following the news of Martin McGuinness’s death.”

“He was a complex character who significantly shaped Northern Ireland as both a senior figure in the IRA and as a politician. We acknowledge that many will find today difficult given Martin McGuinness’s IRA past. However, we must also remember that he came on a significant journey of peace and reconciliation.”

“I met Martin on a number of occasions and he talked about his relationship with Ian Paisley, his own faith and his desire for reconciliation. It is well known that the two prayed together and discussed faith. Martin always seems to have struggled with his own violent past, but he also took the Republican movement on a journey away from violence.”

“Today I pray that Northern Ireland will continue on its journey towards peace and a thriving society. I pray for the many victims of the Troubles and their relatives. I pray for Martin’s wife and family. And I pray that during this season of Lent, we will pause to reflect on Jesus’s ultimate act of sacrifice that brings the opportunity of true freedom to everyone.”

