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The Commissioners
Truth and Reconciliation Commission
GREENSBORO, North Carolina

Dear Commissioners

It is a privilege to write to you to encourage you in the historic task to which you have been appointed.

To be selected a Commissioner of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project is both an honour and a privilege as it attests to your personal integrity and the esteem in which you are held by the community. I congratulate each one of you most warmly on your appointment. But it is also a heavy responsibility. I empathise with you as you begin to come to terms with the challenges that lie ahead.

In South Africa we found it helpful to begin the meetings of the commission, our public hearings and debates with a time of quiet. A time for reflection to remember those who had died or suffered and their families both victims and perpetrators, and to recognise the dignity and integrity of each participant and their right to hold a view that may be different to our own. It was time set aside to place our deliberations into the hands of a Greater Power and many found it helpful.

In our experience reconciliation is a process. Many had thought that by the close of our commission all would be well – they were disappointed. The task of a commission such as this is to bring to light the truth in order to promote reconciliation. Acknowledging that truth and reaching out to each other in understanding is the work that must be undertaken by the members of the Greensboro community and society.

You have the additional burden in initiating this first truth and reconciliation commission in the United States. Many will be looking to you to assess whether similar commissions might be helpful in their communities too. Whether your efforts are seen to be helpful or not in Greensboro I would encourage other communities to consider following your courageous example. To reveal the truth of our past is cathartic, it is healing, it is necessary to restore the dignity and humanity of victims and perpetrators alike.

In South Africa we found it was the truth that helped to make us free and now we are celebrating ten years of democracy.

God bless you

+Desmond M Tutu Archbishop Emeritus

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God - if there is this love among you,
then all will know that you are my disciples."