



200 Years off Grace

To the descendants of –

Andrew Murray (1794 – 1866) and Maria (Stegmann) Murray

200 years after the arrival of the original Andrew Murray from Scotland in South Africa the descendants of this ancestor gathered in Graaff Reinet from all over South Africa and even from Canada, the United Arab Emirates, and Namibia.

At our arrival in Graaff Reinet, we were welcomed with a hearty “Welcome. Hello You Beautiful Murray. We are so happy to have you here!” Each one of us was spoiled with a bulging gift pack containing inter alia a precious dark green velvet blanket, scripted with the words: MURRAY 1822 – 2022. ANDREW MURRAY FAMILY REUNION. GRAAFF REINET. Added to this was a special mug for everyone artistically decorated with the names of the Murray daughters. The winter cold was dispelled with tasty soups served to all. Donkey carts were available to all for transport in the streets of this beautiful Karoo town with its many historic buildings.

Early Friday morning a younger Murray descendant – the family’s first female minister of religion – Rev Cecile Murray-Louw led a meaningful devotional session.

Friday afternoon a business meeting of the newly founded “Andrew Murray Foundation”, a registered Non-profit Organisation (253-816 NPO), was held.

Friday evening the family gathered in the Johan Rupert Theatre for a joyful family concert. A variety of items were presented with the emphasis on the participation of especially children and young people. A Canadian family member and professional rapper from North America, Baba Brinkman, was also present. His contributions were well received. Dirk (Baba) together with family members including his mother, Joyce Brinkman, serving Minister of Fisheries, etc. in the Justin Trudeau Canadian cabinet, specially came to attend the festival.

Early Saturday morning there was a sunrise gathering. Peggy de Vos wrote as follows: “We were invited to gather at 6:30 in the morning at the Botanica site. From there we were transported by bus to a plateau with a view of the town valley with the sun slowly rising from behind the mountains on the other side of the plateau. On arrival, we were spoiled with warm barista coffee (on top of the mountain...!) Each one of us received a hymn sheet as well as communion elements. Walking to the specially prepared gathering area we were welcomed by the most beautiful sounds of a bagpipe. It was incredibly beautiful with, in the background, the rich colours of the rising sun.

All of us present were deeply touched by the family’s hymn-singing, the Word brought to us by the Rev Hannes van Wijk (Charles Murray branch and pastor in the UAE), and the sharing of the communion elements with one another. What a privilege it was, as descendants, 200 years after the arrival of Andrew Murray in Graaff Reinet, to pray for our Father’s blessing on the town and country. I was completely overwhelmed by this special, anointed gathering! It will stay with me for the rest of my life.”

Later that Saturday morning the family gathered in the wagon house of the well-known Reinet House Museum for a very special programme presented by Isabel Murray: *Family stories in Song and Word. Andrew Murray: Letters to his children*. We listened to insightful and touching quotations from letters written by Andrew Murray Jr. to his children. Several of the quotes were beautifully set to music and sung by the talented musician, Laurinda Hofmeyr (Isabella branch).

After a successful family meeting as well as the usual photo session the family had the opportunity to attend a special concert presented by two Murray descendants: Zanta Hofmeyr (violin) and Malane Hofmeyr-Burger (flute), accompanied by Erika Bothma (piano). This concert with professional musicians on the stage was one of the highlights of the weekend’s activities.

Saturday evening, a special gala banquet, attended by 300 family members, followed. The menu was exceptional, and the family enjoyed the food, the relaxed time together, and the informal conversations. Four young men from Graaff Reinet gave a spirited performance on their marimba instruments.

On Sunday morning, we gathered in the impressive central church building which is such a well-known landmark in Graaff Reinet. Beautiful music, including the well-known *Highland Cathedral*, was performed by the organist, prof Albert Troskie together with Erika (piano), Malane (flute), and Zanta (violin). On behalf of the local congregation, a historic Murray Bible was presented to Dr. Derek Bissett, chairperson – of the Murray Family Foundation. Rev Cecile Murray-Louw gave a special message to the children. With reference to the “Murray” text, Isaiah 59:21, the Reverend Attie van Wijk (Charles branch) led the service with an inspiring message for each family member as well as the local congregation. After the singing of our family hymn, “O God of Bethel”, the service concluded with the Rev Van Wijk, together with several Murray descendant ministers, jointly pronouncing the blessing on all present.

The last of the festival events was a wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of our ancestor, Andrew Murray. This was led by the Rev Jan Hofmeyr whose great grandfather, the Rev Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, led the burial service of Andrew Murray in 1866.

The family gathering in Graaff Reinet was a very special experience for all who were so privileged to attend. We were deeply touched by the spirit of love and joy so evident from beginning to end. No less was to be expected. Some years ago, Lizette had an inspiring vision. With her husband Derek’s wholehearted support, she, Derek, and their children were inspired in obedience and love, with heart and soul, to dream, plan, organize, sacrifice and work to make this remarkable gathering an unforgettable experience for us as Murray family members. Our sincere thanks and appreciation to all who contributed especially to Derek and Lizette Bissett!

This however is just the beginning. Regular regional gatherings are being planned. Murray family students at tertiary institutions will be encouraged to connect and participate in campus outreach activities. A project/projects are currently being identified for family members to contribute to. More details to follow in the next circular.

Dear family, we have once again been inspired to keep the family bond alive and to make our Murray ancestors’ legacy our own. We greet all our family members far and near with the request: Let us keep the flame of faith and love, that inspired Andrew and Maria Murray, burning in the South Africa of our day and wherever we as members of this family may find ourselves.

Committee

Andrew Murray Family Association.