

## Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality (AMCS) opening conference

24-26 February 2019, Wellington.

### Rooted in Christ: A harvest exceeding their wildest dreams, Mark 4:8

Theme: Abide in me as I abide in you: the influence of Andrew Murray and the Murrays in Africa.

Presenters: Martin Pauw, Christopher Munikwa, Chatha Msangaambe, Kobus Odendaal and Jurgens Hendriks.

Overview of presentation:

1. Martin Pauw, Emeritus Professor in Missiology and History of Missions, reviewed the wider context and outlined the role and impact of Andrew Murray jnr. on missions within the DRC and elsewhere in Africa. A four page summary was distributed.
2. Christopher Munikwa, former General Secretary of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe and currently vice Moderator of the church while pastoring Zimbabwean congregants in South Africa, witnessed to the influence and fruit in Zimbabwe.
3. Chatha Msangaambe, Moderator of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP), and currently pastoring a congregation in Lilongwe, Malawi, witnessed to the Murray influence in Malawi.
4. Kobus Odendaal, Director for Partnerships: Zimbabwe, Mozambique & Malawi Region, Commission for Witness (CFW) of the Family of Dutch Reformed Churches in the Cape Province, focussed on the "rebirth" of the Reformed Family Forum initiated by the churches that were founded through the influence of Andrew Murray and the work at Wellington.
5. Jurgens Hendriks, Emeritus Professor in Practical Theology and Missiology and Coordinator of NetACT, told the story of the birth and growth of the Network of African Congregational Theology and sees it as the continuing influence of the Murray legacy.

On 5:

NetACT: Coming full circle – the continuing influence and fruits of the Murray legacy. Jurgens Hendriks.

One can find the NetACT story described in detail on the NetACT website, <http://netact.christians.co.za/the-netact-story/>. In this presentation I would like to tell the story with a Murray hermeneutic! The basic presupposition that undergirds what I share is that the Murray legacy came full circle with the conception and growth of this network. In other words: like seed that stay in the ground for a very long time, the missionary seed of the Andrew Murray legacy survived the apartheid misjudgement of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). When it rained again after 1994 the seed germinated and began to grow, rearing a harvest exceeding our wildest dreams.

From 1994 onwards the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University received a growing stream of postgraduate students from the countries where DRC mission work had led to the formation of autonomous churches. These churches established theological schools where they train their pastors, but those of their lecturers and church leaders who required opportunities for further their studies, mostly ventured South.

Confronted by this budding stream of students three staff members from the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch (myself, Martin Pauw & Daniel Louw) and one from the Western Cape (Ernst Conradie)

travelled North in 1997 and visited 37 theological schools in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia. The goal was to meet, to listen and to learn. The Faculty's focus steadily moved to include wider African realities and challenges.

In 2000 the Overseas Council (a USA based leadership development institute) held a conference in Nairobi that discussed the relationship "church and the theological school." At this meeting the lecturers from Reformed institutions informally shared their challenges and concerns. By the end of the conference, they decided to form a network and continue to discuss and work on the issues that they felt they could address better if networked. Thus, in 2001, in Lusaka at the Justo Mwaale Theological College, eight reformed theological schools founded and constituted NetACT.

NetAct had a number of challenges that it vigorously addressed. The first challenge was to be able to communicate with one another. The necessary IT stuff and email was working within a year, even though there were many challenges toward helping all the members to have reliable internet at their schools. The second challenge was to help the staff of the schools to get their Masters' and Doctoral degrees. One can now look back and see what a difference these pioneer leaders have made in their respective churches and countries ... and the process is continuing! An ever growing number of PhD students from all over Africa are studying at Reformed Faculties in South Africa. It is safe to say that these students influenced and changed the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch in a profound way.

One of the biggest challenges that confronted NetAct in 2001 was the HIV-AIDS pandemic. Not a single school addressed the scourge in its programs. This was soon to change. In the next five or more years the HIV focus led to the realization that gender issues and curriculum development issues need our attention because cultural flaws in our many cultures need to be addressed. Several books were published over the span of these years and can be downloaded from the NetACT website.

At present NetAct is focussing on Community Development, Missional Public Theology and once again on addressing the flow of information to its member schools and libraries. The NetACT Internet Portal program is an exciting development. A look at <https://www.netact.org.za/> will open your eyes to the realities of a new world. Our 43 schools with roughly 18,000 students will be able to download core curriculae, other books and journal articles to their cell phones!

For those of us who were privileged to be part of this journey the influence of the Andrew Murray legacy is clear. The parallel between role of the Samuel Residence, the place where so many missionaries were trained in Wellington and that of the Weidenhof (NetACT) House is obvious. Postgraduate students from all over Africa stay in Weidenhof House while studying at Stellenbosch. They call it their home away from home. Take a look at the house at <http://netact.christians.co.za/accommodation/>

NetACT was requested by the World Communion of Reformed Churches to act as their theological think tank in Africa and to welcome theological schools from other denominations. That led to our membership jumping from 15 to 43, with schools from Pentecostal, Orthodox and other denominations joining. These schools accepted the NetACT constitution (<http://netact.christians.co.za/constitution/>) and joined because of the missional emphasis of the network.

When the Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality invited NetACT related schools to use the AMCS for sabbaticals, writers' retreats and conferences, it was literally a dream come true. NetACT hopes to receive R1m per year (through international funding) to make it possible for missional oriented church leaders in Africa to spend time at the AMCS. The need expressed by NetACT was for a centre with a focused retreat spirituality and with a distinct Christian discernment-based contemplative ethos. And the Lord provided! We believe that the AMCS can be instrumental in a new missional awakening on the African continent that has as goal the realization of the Kingdom of God in our troubled continent.

Jurgens Hendriks

26 Febr 2019