



Township
&
Village

PNIËL ON FOOT

WELCOME TO PNIËL

The Stellenbosch district had one of the largest slave populations in the Cape. In 1799, close to 11 000 slaves - mostly from East Africa, Madagascar, India and the East Indies - were recorded as living in Stellenbosch.

On 1 December 1834 slavery came to an end in the Cape, leaving the now freed slaves landless and homeless. In the same year the owners of the farm De Goede Hoop donated 19 hectares of land to establish a missionary settlement for freed slaves. This settlement was called Pniël.

Pniël means "face of God," taken from Genesis 32:30. "So Jacob called the name of the place Pniël: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." (KJV)



Photo by L Croukamp

STOP 1

PNIËL UNITED CONGREGATION CHURCH

In 1843, Rev J.F. Stegmann was appointed as the first leader of the Pniël congregation at the young age of just 18 years old. He was born nearby on the now famous farm Babylonstoren and knew the area and its people well. He served the community of Pniël for 67 years until his death in 1910.

Rev Stegmann was not only the religious leader of Pniël, but he was also schoolmaster and teacher, and handled all social, economic, political and law-enforcement matters of the town.

The original church building was built in 1843 and was expanded in 1865. The original wing is called the Kloof wing, referring to the surrounding valley with the church built in the shape of a cross.

The church bell tower was erected in 1938 and was funded by the Woman's Lodge, dedicated in memory of Rev Stegmann.

STOP 2

PNIËL UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH CEMETERY

This graveyard is the final resting place of the ministers that served the community of Pniël through the years.

Here, you will find the grave of the first reverend of Pniël, Rev J.F. Stegmann. He was also the longest serving reverend, followed by Rev W.L. Nell who served the congregation for over 40 years.

The cemetery is still used by the community today.

STOP 3

DIE WERF (THE YARD)

In 1843 the farm Papiere Molen was sold to the Pniël Institute . This section of land was the original farmyard, hence why it is called 'Die Werf' today - the Afrikaans word for farmyard.

The area pays tribute to the history of Pniël, the freed slaves who formed the community here and serves to commemorate the abolishment of slavery in 1834.



Freedom monument

STOP 4

DIE WERF (THE YARD) FREEDOM MONUMENT

The Freedom Monument commemorates the abolishment of slavery in the Cape.

The monument was designed by the famous Stellenbosch artist, Leon di Blique. It took him six months to make the two birds out of metal plate with the base built with stones from Simonsberg.

The birds symbolise freedom, the fountain represents life, and the flame, love.

(Due to vandalism and water restrictions, the monument was enclosed and the water feature disabled.)

STOP 5

DIE WERF (THE YARD) UBUNTU MONUMENT

The National Heritage Council of South Africa honoured late president Nelson Mandela with the first Ubuntu Award in 2006. In 2007, the award was given to Dr Kenneth Kaunda, former president of Zambia. Dr Kaunda then unveiled the Ubuntu monument on Die Werf in October 2007.

A special rock from Robben Island is mounted on top of a rock that was sourced from the nearby Simonsberg mountain. Together, these two rocks symbolize freedom and reconciliation. This monument honours both those who suffered human rights abuses in our region and in the rest of the world, including the political prisoners who were jailed on Robben Island.



Opened shackle representing freedom



The Werf bell tower

STOP 6

DIE WERF (THE YARD) BELL TREE MONUMENT

The Bell Tree monument was built close to where the original bell tree once stood, before it was damaged by a huge windstorm in 1945. As there was no bell tower here, the bell was instead hung on one of the branches of this tree.

The enormous oak tree was a well-known and beloved landmark. The fruit traders packed their fresh fruit under the tree during the very hot summers and it was also called the “love tree,” with many young couples swearing their eternal love to each other under this Bell Tree.

Today, this monument symbolises the traditions and history of the town’s people.

STOP 7

DIE WERF (THE YARD) BELL TOWER

The original slave bell dates back to the time of Rev Stegmann. The bell was rung to announce church services, funerals and prayer meetings or to notify residents of a town emergency. It was also rung to announce the 9pm curfew that once existed.

During a windstorm in 1945 a branch of the Bell Tree broke, and the bell fell to the ground and was damaged. Rhodes Fruit Farms replaced the damaged bell with a new bell and the original bell was repaired and given back to the community in 2006.

This Bell Tower was built in memory of our slave ancestors. Every year on 1 December at 12:00, the slave bell is rung to commemorate the abolishment of slavery in 1834, to remember the area's slave heritage and honour the slaves that shaped this community.

STOP 8

PNIËL MUSEUM

The Pniël Museum was once the original farmhouse of the farm Papiere Molen and dates back to 1780.

The museum tells the history of this former mission station and how Pniël grew and developed into the peaceful village it is today.