

The extraordinary tale of a school called Thembelihle

Glenda Fowle

As a result of the vision and financial backing of a member of the Howick Methodist Church, Thembelihle Pre-Primary School started in the church hall in May 1993 with 18 children.

The number increased to 45 children during the first year, with a principal and one assistant teacher.

The choice of the name (Thembelihle) and the motto (*Grow and Glow*) implied confidence for the school's future development.

The aim was three-fold: to provide excellent accessible education for children disadvantaged by poverty; provide training for young women in the field of education; and, eventually, to expand into a full primary school.

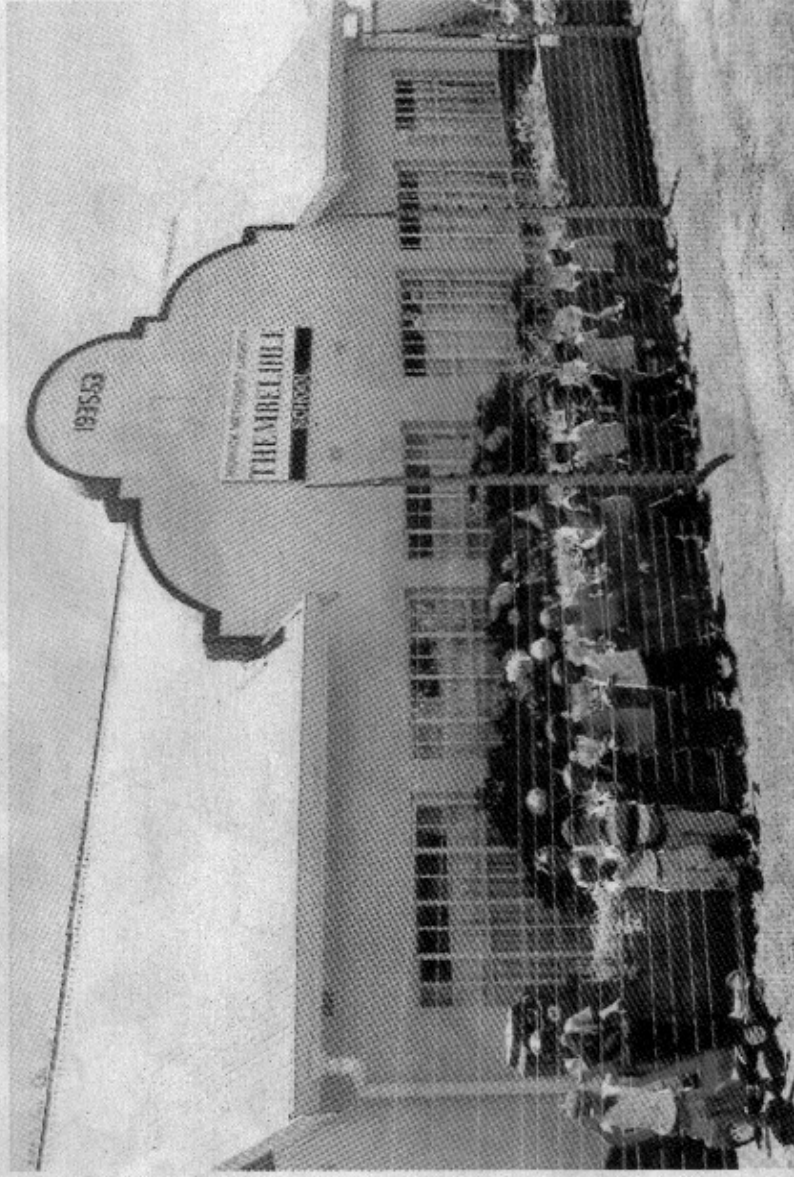
Over the years, the school developed and grew in size without moving beyond Grade R.

During the time of economic recession, we introduced a sponsorship system, encouraging individuals and groups in the church to pay the expenses for the children from a nearby informal settlement.

We worked with an organisation which had just come into being, Angel's Care, and they identified indigent children and referred them to us to arrange sponsorships.

This resulted in close relationships between children and sponsors who found it most rewarding to watch these little ones grow and glow.

In 2005 we received a grant of R15 000 from the Millennium Fund, most of which was spent on



came into being. And so, 18 years later, the final part of that initial three-fold vision has come true!

There is particular significance in this merge, since Merit Christian School was started in 1989 by Mrs Eileen Gumley - a woman of determination with a vision for education and a love for children.

When the Methodist Church wanted to start Thembelihle in 1993 Mrs Gumley was the one we referred to for advice and guidance.

When she left South Africa, her assistant and companion, Mrs Joyce Ntuli faithfully continued her work under very difficult conditions.

2011 has not been an easy year. However, by God's grace and with lots of hard work, and love, the school has begun to develop its own life and tradition - and, wonderfully music has become a key element of that life.

A little choir has come into being and is already making a name for itself in the area.

Recently, a Dedication Celebration was held when we dedicated Thembelihle School - to equipping learners of life through Christian Education which fosters innovation and excellence, nurtures academic, spiritual, social and emotional growth and provides Christian service to all people of the Howick Community, through education.

grounds of Nongqaza Primary School. Their urgent need had caught the attention of a concerned Howick family, who were willing to arrange and pay for 3 classrooms to be erected (during the Christmas holidays) in the grounds of our new school building.

And in a huge leap of faith, the members of HMC agreed to this, and so in January 2011, Head Teacher Mrs Joyce Ntuli, and her assistant, together with 120 children, merged

develop into a Junior Primary. And so, by 2010 we had 152 children registered, with Brentwood sponsoring 115 of them.

However, the urgent need to develop into a Junior Primary School remained - our graduating Grade R children were finding it more and more difficult to obtain places in the township schools.

In November 2010 the Howick Methodist Church was approached to consider accommodating 120

to house the local Methodist Minister. (During the war years, 1917, it was sold, bought back in 1973, sold in 1980, and bought back again in April 2000.)

A group from Brentwood United Methodist Church in Tennessee visited us which began a wonderful, ongoing relationship contributing enormously to the rapid growth of the school.

In 2008 we were offered an opportunity to purchase a building

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