

# ALBERT STREET REFUGEE SCHOOL



**LOCATION:** Johannesburg CBD, South Africa.

**TARGET GROUP:** Displaced persons of all ages.

## HISTORY AND BACKGROUND.

The Albert Street Methodist Church, built in 1893, was the first church for Africans in what was formerly called the Witwatersrand Mission. In 1887, the first Wesleyan minister arrived in Johannesburg to help serve the hundreds of thousands of people who flocked to the area to work in the gold mines. These workers lacked basic education and gathered at the church in the evenings to learn how to read and do simple math. Before long, the Albert Street School was born for children of domestic workers who were barred from enrolling in new schools for white children. In 1958, during the Apartheid era, the Albert Street School was shut down by the government. The school, in operation for more than 50 years, provided sound academics and excelled in athletics and music education and also launched many distinguished African educators and ministers.

The growing number of homeless persons, compounded by the ever increasing economic hardships, recent xenophobic attacks and the influx of refugees from neighboring countries, has resulted in hundreds of refugee children seeking refuge at Central Methodist Church and on the streets of central Johannesburg. In July, 2008, the new Albert Street Refugee School under the direction of Bishop Verryn of the Central Methodist Church, reopened to serve these displaced and marginalised children.

Starting with 17 children of different levels, 4 teachers and 2 cooks the Albert Street Refugee School now plays a key role in rebuilding a community that suffered greatly under apartheid and the depopulation of central Johannesburg. The school is run and managed by the Central Methodist Mission Deaconess Society and now has an enrolment of 534 students with a staff compliment of 21 teachers, 1 secretary, 4 cooks, 1 cleaner, 2 security personnel and 6 volunteer adult teachers. The school offers a full educational programme (Cambridge University Curriculum) for primary and secondary education. At the time of writing 6 students were writing their Cambridge University Ordinary level exams at the British Council. Over and above the primary and secondary education the school also runs an adult programme offering academic, professional short courses in computers and Hotel Catering and management with an enrollment of 50 students.



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LONEHILL METHODIST CHURCH  
OUTREACH

As the school strides towards its vision to empower the African child, who is in political, social and economic crisis, through education and skills development and to restore human dignity through educational and recreational activities, the school continues to face funding problems leading to the loss of highly qualified staff.



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