



## **A Narrative History**

Global Partners in Christian Education was birthed during a conversation at a Fraser Valley Christian High School (FVCHS) board table in 2004 while plans were underway for a major building project. The focus of that conversation came from an embarrassment of riches; being able to consider a \$7 million building in one of the wealthiest most privileged parts of the world, as many other countries were dealing with hardships. The board and staff decided they wanted to share the gift of Christian education with a partner community somewhere in the developing world where they would dearly love to have a Christian school but might not have the financial resources to make it happen. A series of connections and circumstances led them to Sierra Leone, a little country in West Africa, and in April of 2005 Dennis deGroot, the principal at the time, travelled there for an exploratory trip.

Plans were set in motion for the construction of a modest primary school structure in the rural Koinadugu district in the northern part of the country. FVCHS students launched their own fundraiser which generated \$60,000 for this project. In partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions, a local school board was formed in Sierra Leone, a principal was hired, and a piece of land purchased. Construction began in January 2007 and was completed in June, with 4 teachers hired before opening day. Surrey Christian School (PreK-7) also joined the tithing effort as we ran a joint capital campaign that year. The first school year began in September 2007 with about 100 children at CRC Primary School.

Not long after the completion of the building project here in Surrey, the merger discussions between Surrey Christian School and Fraser Valley Christian High School were leading us closer to the reality of one PreK-12 Surrey Christian School. Legal advice recommended creating a separate society for auditing and liability purposes to protect the newly formed Surrey Christian School Society. This was accomplished at the same time as the formal merger on August 1, 2010, and Global Partners in Christian Education (GPCE) was founded with its own constitution, though the same goals and mandate were carried forward; "To advance Christian education, relieve poverty and advance other purposes beneficial to the community by engaging in exclusively charitable educational, social and economic development projects and programs, in poor and in-need communities in Canada, Asia, Africa, Central America, and other locations..." GPCE has its own board elected by the members of the society who are the directors of Surrey Christian School.

### **Added Partnerships**

An additional blessing of the FVCHS/SCS merger in 2010 was the opportunity for both schools to adopt each other's preexisting global partnerships. For example, since 1995, the SCS middle campus had developed a strong relationship with Juan Calvino Christian School in Choluteca, Honduras, and that partnership now falls under the umbrella management of GPCE. SCS re-kindled a partnership with Tshikheva Christian School in Thohoyandou, South Africa, and began a partnership with iCount high

school in Moricetown, British Columbia. We also have a growing number of relationships with schools in Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Brazil, which can fall under the GPCE umbrella.

### **Current Realities**

Like any relationship, these school-to-school partnerships have provided many opportunities for our SCS community to learn and grow. One significant means for this learning is our school's Intercultural Learning Trips, which take place every spring. As a community, we have been able to send teams of SCS students and staff to each of the partnership locations with the intention of learning about and strengthening the partnership. The insights gained, and the stories they have brought back have deeply enriched our community. In recent years we have been able to offer a Lead Across Cultures course, which gives SCS students to opportunity to work with some of our Asian partners.

In the cases of Juan Calvino Christian School and Kabala Christian School, our SCS community can support these schools financially. Events and programs such as our annual Walk-a-Thon and a child sponsorship program provide opportunities for our students, teachers, and parents to engage these partnerships in tangible and meaningful ways.