



Global Partners in Christian Education

A Narrative History

Global Partners in Christian Education was birthed in a conversation at a FVCHS board table in 2004 at the same time that plans were underway for a major building project that would result in our beautiful new and renovated secondary campus that we finally occupied in 2009. The focus of that conversation came from an embarrassment of riches; being able to consider building a \$7 million building in one of the wealthiest most privileged parts of the world, even as countries such as Sierra Leone were dealing with particular hardships. The board and staff came to the conclusion that we wanted to share this gift of Christian education with a partner community somewhere in the developing world, a place that would dearly love to have a Christian school but might not have the financial resources to make it happen. It was a recognition that we are blessed in order to bless others. A series of connections and circumstances led us to Sierra Leone, a little country in West Africa, and in April of 2005 Dennis deGroot for an exploratory trip.

Plans were set in motion towards the construction of a modest primary school structure in the rural Koinadugu district in the northern part of the country. High school students got on board in a big way, and launched their own fundraiser which generated \$60,000 for this project. In SL, in partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions, a local school board was formed, a principal was hired, a piece of land purchased and construction began in January 2007 and was completed in June, with 4 teachers hired before opening day. Surrey Christian School 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 projects here, the merger discussions were leading us closer to the reality of one PreK-12 Surrey Christian School. Legal advice suggested that creating a separate society for auditing and liability purposes would be advisable, 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 was 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 membership which is the board 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. Also since 2010, SCS has re-kindled a partnership with Tshikheva Christian School in Thohoyandou, South Africa, and begun 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 to learn and grow. One significant means for this learning to take place 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 as a whole. In recent years we have been able to offer a Lead across Cultures course, which gives SCS students the opportunity to work with some of our Asian partners.

In the cases of Juan Calvino Christian School and Kabala Christian School, our SCS community has the opportunity to support these schools by way of finances. Events and programs such as the 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.