

Dear Friends in GFS

I write this letter during the Season of Advent as we prepare for Christmas – writing cards, buying and wrapping presents and many festivities around the World, but let us not lose sight of Bethlehem and the manger where Jesus our Saviour was born.

We can ask ourselves though, what about Bethlehem today? A place I'm sure where many babies and children are amongst the atrocities every day! We also hear of many other tragedies that happen. I write this a few days after the shooting in America, where our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of the children and teachers who were victims on that terrible day. We must also not forget the family and friends of the boy who shot them, as Jesus would say forgive them for they know not what they do.

Some people ask where is God in all of this? He was there with them in their suffering. He is there to comfort the families and the children who were saved by the teachers.

God is with us as we look forward to a New Year, filled with love and hope for the future in GFS Worldwide as we strive for peace in the World.

'What I can, I give Him, give my heart.'

May God Bless you all and 'Thank you' for all you do in the name of GFS. May you and your families have a Happy and Blessed Christmas.

Yours in Christ

*Glenys*

Glenys and I are so indebted to all those kind people who made our world wind tour of Australia so memorable. It indeed was a privilege to share in so many activities and celebrations in such a short space of time. The itinerary planned for us so amazing.

How I managed to carry over 6kgs - the weight of two copies of the History of Tasmania GFS – along with some other items in hand luggage across Australia without being checked for weight on the internal flights I'm not quite sure. Then there was the tin of cream of corn given me by Ross. I carried this across most of Australia only to have it confiscated before flying back home.

After Australia we moved on to another world PNG. It was truly another world, and one which appeared to be full of deprivation! No home comforts, no sanitation, no beds, no cookers – the list is endless. A world where people washed clothes, pots and pans, and even themselves, in the river; a world where the priest would walk over eight hours to conduct a service in a remote village.

Yet, despite their simple, hard lives, these remote villagers were truly aglow with the love of God. In some villages they were pulling down churches and building new, bigger ones to accommodate larger congregations.

It was a privilege to be in PNG. It was a place that made you feel very humble. If we ask ourselves who's got it right, in many ways the answer must be that they do! Especially with God!

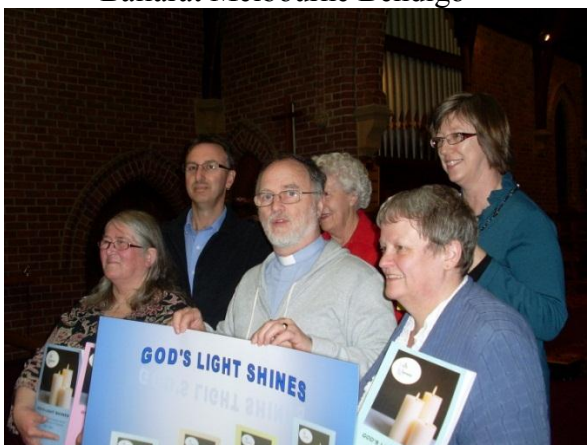
Below are just a few of the pictures!



Ballarat Melbourne Bendigo



Newcastle & Sydney



Book Launch Tasmania



David's new flock?





Young people at Popendetta



Glenys trying to dance



Young people at Gorari



Health Centre Eiwo



M.U. Melbourne



M.U. and Clergy Wivies Port Moresby

Glenys and I once again express our gratitude to all who took care of us in Australia and PNG and those who allowed us to stay with them. A Particular thanks to Val Gribble who arranged our visit and accompanied us to PNG. Diolch yn fawr.

## NEWS FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Mary Bagu has asked me to send everyone greetings and asked me to write some news from PNG. Mary is much tied up with school activities and attending the Diocesan Synod. Synod in the Diocese of Popondota is held in various parishes and only every two years (because of financial restraints) This year it is at Afore, a long way up into the mountains over a difficult road, one of the more isolated areas, but with a large Anglican population, in the Diocese of Popondota. So it means Mary has to take much time off from school to represent GFS at Synod.

In late September the Revd Sue Wilson and I visited Popondetta to conduct the usual Children's Ministry Training and to participate in GFS Week, a new initiative when members came together for a week of training and fellowship for the inaugural Gribble Cup Volley Ball Tournament and World Day of Prayer. We were only meant to be in Popondetta for 2 days, then going on to Aipo Rongo Diocese for a 6 day visit to introduce the Children's Ministry program to another part of this large diocese. But our much loved main trainer, The Revd Cheryl Selvage, suffered a serious knee injury and couldn't travel so we cancelled the Aipo Rongo trip and concentrated on Popondota.

Many of the members came to the Children's Ministry training which meant over 200. Cheryl had prepared the programs, Sue was a very able trainer, the theme was based around music and the Psalms and we had people making musical instruments from toilet roll holders, large buttons on fingers as clappers, tambourines from paper plates. It is important we recognise that resources are so limited. We were thrilled that people at the sessions are now skilled in picking up the format and in groups they presented some wonderful Sunday school programs based on a Psalm. So the previous World Project is continuing. The Bishop of Popondota has asked if we will consider a Train the Trainer program with some of the youth members (mostly male) and fund them to go to some of the very isolated areas of the diocese (places we will ever be able to visit) so they can introduce the Sunday School programs to these parishes. We were also thrilled that a number of the wives of students at the Theological College attended the training. We have thoughts of asking if we can present a one day training program to ordinands and their wives next year. Our National Executive in Australia will discuss this in January.

There were 200 people at the tournament, many GFS members who came back especially to participate. The youth organisation members did much of the organisation and refereeing etc., the competition was fierce and it was just a great two days. GFS in Popondota should be congratulated on this initiative and it will now become an annual event.

GFS Haus was a hive of activity with so many people living in tents and under shelters around the building. There was an interesting session from the Diocesan Coordinator for HIV/AIDS awareness - frightening statistics and information. We had a fun night of beading (thank you Air Niugini again for allowing us to take so much extra luggage) and then after we left the World Day of Prayer service was held. It is always so heartening to see members who have little income giving generously to the World Project on this day. GFS in the Diocese of Popondetta is growing and thriving. God is good!





Making music resources Popondetta  
Cathedral



Getting ready for the parade of teams for  
the volleyball tournament



The Revd Sue Wilson and children at the  
Port Moresby training

VAL GRIBBLE



Val Gribble presenting the winning cup to  
Resurrection parish team

## ***Ireland***

GFS in Ireland is running smoothly. All branches reopened in the harvest having been free over the summer months. Unfortunately the weather remained poor during the holidays, but hopefully Girls and Leaders alike were able to enjoy some time of relaxation. At this point in time Branches are very busy. Craft work, Bible Study, Badge work and of course good fun and fellowship is also on the agenda.

Happy occasions took place for two of our members during 2012. Firstly, in July Isla Poyntz, (our former Junior Delegate) was married in Kilmore Cathedral, Co. Cavan. Just prior to the Ceremony and heavy rain, Jean Lindsay and GFS girls were able to form a guard of honour as the bride arrived and as she entered Church – we wish Isla and Glenn every blessing as they both go forward together in life as a ‘married couple’.

Naomi Quinn of Longford branch was ordained priest in Derry Cathedral, (Dioceses of Derry and Raphoe) in September. Diocesan Council members from her Dioceses of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh were present. It was also lovely to see Central Council members from other Dioceses there as well. We wish Naomi well while she serves as Curate in the parishes of Castledearg and Killeter (Derry Diocese) for the coming three years.

I had the privilege of representing GFS Ireland at a Mothers' Union Service of Celebration in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. It was lovely to be part of this most uplifting and enjoyable occasion. Mothers' Union is 125 years old in Ireland this year – just ten years younger than GFS Ireland. Their first branch to open was in Raheny in North Dublin. This is a wonderful achievement for their organisation and we wish M.U. continued success in future years.

I was also invited to a very nice occasion when GFS World Ltd. began closing down. Everyone concerned wasn't able to be there, but those present had an enjoyable time of fellowship together. I must congratulate Emila and her team on a job 'well done' in hosting the 2011 World Council here in Ireland.

A lot of changes have taken place among our Bishops in recent times. Archbishop Alan Harper, also Primate of All Ireland has retired. We say 'thank you' and wish him and Mrs. Harper well as they adjust to life in retirement. Bishop Richard Clarke of Meath and Kildare Dioceses has been elected as his successor. This can only be referred to as a 'giant calling and step' for Bishop Richard. We pray that God will grant him the necessary strength and wisdom as he takes on the mantle of leading the Church of Ireland forward in demanding and challenging times. We also pray that his family will be blessed as they support him on his journey.

In my own Dioceses of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh Bishop Ken Clarke has retired as Bishop after twelve years. He is returning to work with SAMS (South American Missions) as its Director in this country, and we wish him well. He and Mrs. Helen Clarke will live in Northern Ireland but of course some travel will be involved as he follows his 'calling' in Ministry.

I must say at this point that GFS in this country is most grateful to these three Bishops for their constant support and help over the years, and pray that Episcopal Electors will be wisely guided as they elect suitable Shepherds for the two vacant Dioceses.

I am conscious that we are in the Season of Advent and I am very aware of the festivities of the coming Christmas time – the celebration of the birth of Baby Jesus long ago, remembering that this same baby Jesus grew up to be our Saviour.

There is a Hymn which begins as follows:

*Advent tells us Christ is near;  
Christmas tells us Christ is here;  
Then we learn what life can be  
In our Lord's Epiphany.*

During the festive season let us take an occasional minute in prayer to remember fellow members who may be ill at this time, who may be experiencing hardship or who may have

lost loved ones during 2012. Christmas will be more difficult for them, and it is necessary that our love and prayers are felt, because we are one big loving family.

I will finish with a Christmas Prayer written by Robert Louis Stephenson, (1850-1894) the Scottish poet and writer. I think it says a lot in a few lines.

***Loving father,***

*Help us to remember the birth of Jesus*

*That we may share in the song of angels,*

*The gladness of the shepherds,*

*And the worship of the wise men.*

*Close the doors of hate and open*

*The doors of love all over the world.*

*Let kindness come with every gift*

*And good desires with every greeting.*

*Deliver us from evil by the blessing*

*Which Christ brings,*

*And teach us to be merry with clean hearts.*

*May the Christmas morning make us happy*

*To be your children.*

*May the Christmas evening bring us to*

*Our beds with grateful thoughts,*

*Forgiving and forgiven,*

*For Jesus' sake.*

***Amen.***

***On behalf of GFS Ireland I wish worldwide members and their families a truly Blessed and Peaceful Christmas time, followed by a Bright and Happy New Year.***



***Love to everyone,  
Sylvia Quinn.***