

GFS WORLD NEWSLETTER



From the World President

Greetings to all GFS members and friends.

As we walk the Lenten path I trust that you are able to find time to spend those extra minutes reflecting on the life of Our Lord and our own spiritual growth as we prepare for the Alleluia's of Easter. I have been using a Reflection written by Celia Kemp on behalf of our Australian Mission organisation – ABM-A. Simple, thought-provoking reflections called – “Into the Desert” and which I can read on my phone each day, wherever I am. I was struck by a statement last week “God doesn’t always alter the circumstances. Sometimes God uses them to alter us”.

I know that some of our circumstances are difficult. I have friends who are travelling deep paths of grief – and I like to think that God can use these circumstances to alter us and lead us on new paths.

It thrills me to see countries using the theme of “Serving through GFS” or “You are called to serve through GFS”. I know that some of our Australian members have adopted the idea of GFS in the USA to wear an eight bead bracelet and to attempt to make eight acts of service during the day. It is a challenge!

During the next few days your country leader will receive two application forms – one to submit a proposal for the next World Project. The other to offer to be Host Country from 2020-2023.

Not every country, of course, will submit a proposal for a World Project but as I listen to country leaders around the world I know there are many good proposals just waiting to be documented. We can only accept one or two but it would be so good to know the needs of your country and to put forward a plan to meet those needs.

2020 seems a long way away but Thembeke and I know how we are benefiting from having many, many conversations about World Council and the management of World Council between meetings and I know Thembeke will take over the role with good knowledge and understanding. So it is important to choose the Host Country for 2020-2023 at our World Council next year and to spend time thinking about who you would then nominate as the World President so that person can work with Thembeke before she takes over the role. May God walk with you for the rest of Lent and may we all be ready to sing the Alleluia's as we greet the Risen Lord.

Val

FROM THE WORLD CHAPLAIN

A six-year old girl getting out of bed on the wrong side one morning ran straight into trouble. She objected to her clothes and refused to put them on. Her breakfast was also wrong so she would not eat it. Having by then annoyed her other family members and crossed her mother, she found herself so tangled up in trouble that her world that very morning seemed to be falling about her ears.

Finally her father came along and said, "Now look, young woman; we had nothing but trouble this morning. What are you going to do about yourself?" There was a pause, then a burst of tears and three simple words, "I'm sorry Daddy," and would you believe it, in two minutes the world around the family was right. The family was reconciled, the girl's tears were wiped away and everything seemed strangely as it should be. All she had done was to repent.

Can we take the simple step this little girl took?

Once we have seen and have taken the simple way of repentance, the Holy Spirit leads us to see the simplicity of God's grace. The way of repentance and grace leads us into the simple way of fellowship with our risen Lord and Saviour.

We then become the Easter people, the people whose praise is Alleluia!

Like the six year old girl, we who serve God through the GFS Ministry will also need to be corrected and guided for our ministry. Like the father who made the in-road for the child to repent, the Lenten season in itself acts as the in-road for us to check on our shortfalls in ministry, repent and reconcile in fellowship with God and with one another.

True fellowship found in our GFS ministry is the nature of our Christian life and the church, the atmosphere of God's presence in which we learn and grow into the dimensions of the love of God through Christ on the early Easter morning.

May we check to maintain our fellowship with God and with one another this Easter with the three simple words "I'm sorry, Daddy".

Father Isaiah Masida, Papua New Guinea.

LAST MINUTE NEWS FROM JAPAN

We have been able to send \$18,483.69 from your very generous gifts to the Japan World Project. Haruko writes today :

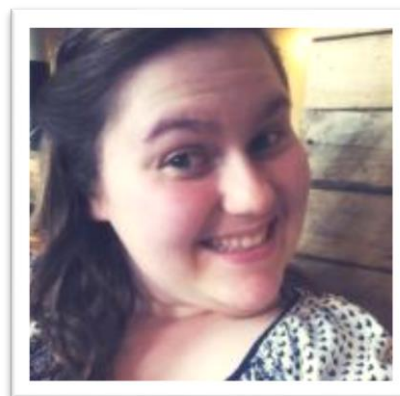
Thank you for your kindness. We do not forget you and GFS sisters in the world who would help the suffer from the Tsunami and Fukushima accident in 2011. We are going to use the money for the suffering people who have a lot of trouble still now .Please say hello to GFS sisters in the world.

Tasha Moore (Junior delegate for GFS UK World council in Wales)

Age: 19

What do you do with yourself?

I am a early years trainee teacher, studying at Edge Hill University in Ormskirk, Lancashire, UK. I am also a part - time cleaner and general student!



How did you first become involved with GFS?

I first became involved in GFS when I attended my local GFS branch meeting on a Friday night at the age of 9. It was fabulous and I enjoyed every minute!!

What is your current involvement with GFS?

I currently only have the opportunity to pop into my home branch once every term (there are not any local ones near me at uni)

What did you learn from World Council?

There are not any words to describe World Council. It was, by far, one of the best experiences of my life. GFS girls from all corners of the Earth were gathered in unision for one thing: to change people's lives. That is my mission in life and WC helped me to begin to achieve this. Go to world council as it is a fantastic opportunity; the heart of GFS. Also, keep GFS'ing!!

What does GFS mean to you?

GFS means friendship, love and happiness. It was a place for me to go on an evening to talk with friends, learn new skills and gain a wider view of the world. It has opened so many doors for me that I wouldn't have been given anywhere else.

Tegan Hudson – World Youth Officer



With the completion of her university degree, Tegan secured her Professional Development Year with a job at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne. This position gives her experience with three different hospitals within Victoria, something she is looking forward to.

It does however mean a move out of NSW, and "goodbyes" to her local GFS Branch at Camden.

There is also much excitement with the move as Tegan and Joel Gillie (her Melbourne based boyfriend) announced their engagement on the 24th December. We all wish Tegan and Joel God's blessings as they begin their lives together. We also wish Tegan all the best in her new job.

Youth Exchange Update

From Tegan: The pilot Sri Lankan exchange program was very effective at increasing interest of GFS countries in investing in such a program. Even whilst I was in Sri Lanka I was in correspondence with USA and Uganda about how they could get involved. I spent many humid evenings brainstorming many ideas for the program from the experience of personally travelling to Sri Lanka. Even the little things such as organising vaccinations, VISA's and travel insurance, were important learning experiences that need to be considered when setting up global travel opportunities. I am pleased to share that as far as I can tell this program will be of more benefit than I initially thought, and will take less effort than I imagined to establish in its grassroots stages.

Our Sri Lankan pilot trip highlighted the benefit of hosting more than one GFS youth member at a time and the importance of finding a skill / interest that the youth delegate can use specifically in connecting with and serving their host country. I also realised the importance of a facilitator to ensure that the host country and delegate have a smooth and safe exchange experience, and that the personal and spiritual growth opportunities afforded by this program are maximised.

I look forward to continuing to formulate the structure of this exchange program with the help of the World Youth Working Party, but am incredibly excited to be involved in this project in the long term for God's glory and the growth of His kingdom ministry through GFS.

When I left Sri Lanka, I was asked many times to come back. God willing I would love to!

But either way, I am very excited to be involved in the process of sending other young women from around the world to have a similar experience.

Lastly, I would love to sincerely thank from the bottom of my heart the GFS Australian dioceses and individuals who donated money to help fund this pilot exchange trip. I would have been unable to attend without this financial help and appreciate it very much. Thank you for having a long-term vision for GFS, and for allowing me the privilege of seeing God in action through GFS.

With love and prayers (from a very new state and life stage!)

Tegan Hudson

NEWSLETTER

Thank you all for your articles and reports for this newsletter.

However, I would remind everyone that the size of articles is 500 words. I have allowed some with many more words in this newsletter as they are from new countries and countries that are not always able to send articles. Also some of them have been reports to me and I felt they needed to be printed in whole. PLEASE DO NOT EMBED PHOTOS WITHIN YOUR ARTICLE. It makes it very difficult for us to reproduce them satisfactorily. Please send them separately as jpg files (or similar) and we will input them to the article. Remember 2 only photos.

I am very conscious that a number of people only read the newsletter on their phones and so we like to try to keep the articles as concise as possible.



NEWS ABOUT WORLD COUNCIL 2017

By the time this newsletter is printed your country leader will have the first Information Sheet about next year's World Council. Please ask your country leader for a copy if it has not been sent to you. **The dates for World Council have changed by one day** – Council will now commence on Tuesday 11 July 2017 and finish after breakfast on Friday 21 July. The cost is still being worked on but may be in Information Sheet 1. There is specific information about visas for Australia in the Information Sheet and it is highly advised that you seek information regarding the requirements for your country of residence. Every person, with the exception of citizens of New Zealand require a visa to enter Australia.

We are excited at the thought of welcoming you all to Australia but numbers may be limited so keep looking at the Information Sheets as they come out and be prepared to register quickly when the registration forms are sent out at the end of June this year.

WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND OUR GFS WORLD?

GFS LIBERIA

I bring you greetings from Sister Ester H. Page, President of the Diocesan Girls' Friendly Society, who is currently attending to her health in the USA; greetings from the Officers and Members of the Girls' Friendly Society of the Episcopal Church of Liberia.

I like to start up this update with thanksgiving to God for sparing the lives of our members.

Activities

Some of our Parishes provided brand new sewing machines, a 4 burner stove, and an oven for sewing and pastry lessons. GFS in turn had fund raising programs to help their parishes undertake some projects that had been earmarked for the period. Among the activities for the fund raising program were, Cake Rally, shining of shoes, washing of Parishioners cars and decorating their Parish for Principal services.

More so, they had GFS Awareness and Back to School Programs. From April - June, 2015, they carried on food sale. Proceeds from this venture were used to purchase food and non-food items for onward donation to Diana E. Davies Orphanage Home on July 4, 2015. I am glad that our girls are thoughtful by leaving out selves and reaching out to the less fortunate in their surroundings. Thanks to the girls and their sponsors.

During 2015, our branches presented a film projector, hand sanitizers and other hygienic items to their Parishes as their gift.

From December 27 – 30, 2015, the Girls attended a vacation camp during the Christmas break to enable them have a better understanding of the significance of Christmas. The camp was held at the home of one of the Branch Coordinators,



Taken after 2015 World Day of prayer Service

Sister Christine Sonpon Freeman. The theme of the camp was "Making sure girls have the time of their lives where creativity, adventures social skills, character building and reflection on old good times". Other activities included, Bible study, Baking, Handiwork, Daily Devotions, retreat, and workshop on "Girls Education, Women Empowerment and Hygiene" Games, among others.

Some of the branches are very committed to their regular Saturday classes from 12 mid-day to 3:30P.M. During these classes, the girls are taught how to sew, how to do praise and worship dance and how to cook; and they also have fun.

All of our girls are doing well with their lessons and going as far as taking on leadership roles in their schools. A good number of them are now in higher learning institutions. The leadership is now challenged with incorporating activities that will meet the needs of the girls in order to retain the ones that are still available and equally reach out to younger girls. 20 GFSers participated in the 4th International Day of the Girl Child which began on October 8 – 12, 2015 under the Global Theme: The Power of the Adolescent Girl Vision 2030 and the National Theme: "Education for Girls' Empowerment".

We had Admission Services to admit new members. There were 51 in attendance at the GFS World Day of Prayer Service held on September 27, 2015. We have been praying for Llyn Carter health, the family of the two GFS members who died in a tragic motor accident, Val's husband, and the World Council. "May our cries come unto Thee o Lord". Amen.

CHALLENGES

The organization is now faced with leadership issue/mentorship from the branch level to the Diocesan level. The girls are willing to attend classes and meetings to learn how to grow in this difficult world but there are fewer mentors. It is on this note that I made a special appeal at our just ended Women and Diocesan Convention for more women to volunteer their time, talent, and resources to work more closely with the girls so as to prepare them for the challenges ahead of them.

The challenges of drug addiction, standing in a bowing society, job seeking, peer pressure, identity crisis, gender base violence, stereotyping / prejudices, the negative aspect of social media, early marriage, terrorism, ritualistic killing and the like.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank our President, Canon Val for her tireless efforts in getting info to us in Liberia. Thanks ever so much and to God be the glory.

Faithfully submitted:

Georgiana T. Williams

ACTING COORDINATOR



GFS visitation to James N. Davies Memorial Hospital

GFS MELANESIA

In December last year, GFS Melanesia together with the Provincial Mothers Union staff visited the inmates at the Rove Correctional Institute in Honiara.

It took the group a long week of preparation and rehearsals to finally put all things together. On that day, the GFS girls and the PMU staff met at the office at 10am and helped packed the cooked food in containers and drinks in cooler. A birthday cake also prepared and decorated with the wording on it saying "A birthday cake for Jesus" in which the GFS girls were to also carry it as part of their skit. On that day the correctional institute was kind enough to arrange for a transport .

As we arrived at the prison gate, the prison officers thoroughly checked us and led us to the hall where the Juveniles and many other long term inmates awaited.

The moment we settled in, the program began with introduction and few choruses were sang. The girls went on stage and performed the short skit followed by inspired choruses like, "This little light of mine", "Let your light shine" and "Jesus masta sevia and King (pidgin version).

In returned the inmates and the officers sang a few songs to us, which the inmates composed themselves and made short speeches.

The officer in-charge in his speech said, it was really great to see young girls (GFS) involved in such a Christian Ministry and shared the Christmas message with inmates, and truly it was the first time such a girls Ministry could pay visit to the Prison and even asked if GFS could pay another visit to the prison especially on Easter with an Easter message. Best wishes and God's Blessing be upon you Betty



Everybody sitting down comfortably before the introduction



Singing "Christians do not hide your light"



The coordinator & assistant giving out copies of chorus.



Birthday Cake

GFS JAPAN

Please welcome Miss Ayumi Okagaki as the new President of GFS Japan. Ayumi was elected at the recent national gathering at Kyoto. Ayumi was the Japanese Junior Delegate to the USA World Council in 2005 and it is such a joy to see young leaders accepting these important roles. Please pray for Ayumi and all members in Japan as they prepare for their 100th celebrations at the end of July.

Haruko Mizutani will be the main contact for English communication – haru-miz@h09.itscom.net
Ayumi's email address is orangepink918@gmail.com

If you are a Facebook user you can also communicate with both Haruko and Ayumi on Facebook.



Asako on right welcoming Ayumi as GFS Japan President with the Bishop of Osaka.

GFS RWANDA

THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF GFS ON 12TH/12/2015

In Rwanda, the Girls Friendly Society (GFS) Ministry takes on a unique shape. With the events and aftermath of 1994 genocide, we are experiencing a generation gap where many young women have little input from older mothers and grandmothers who were lost or traumatized by the genocide. Since that time, Girls and young women started to face a number of serious problems that has affected them economically, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Some were raped and abused sexually, they got pregnant and affected by HIV, and others were forced to abort their babies by their families and so forth. Furthermore there is a great disconnection between the remaining generation of older Christian women and the younger generation of this quickly growing and developing country.

The GFS will seek to be a bridge between older Christian women and young girls in an attempt to protect them and proclaim the gospel to the next generation and provide support for young ladies in this rapidly growing society. Furthermore, GFS will also seek to build up young ladies spiritually, physically and emotionally through Bible studies, prayer gatherings, education trainings, outreach, and mentorship relationships on one hand. The GFS will also focus on improving their well being by development trainings, grouping them into savings and credits associations, Advocating for their education and trainings on income generating activities.



Participants during workshops

The GFS will also seek to share the Gospel with this generation and as young ladies are being transformed in Christ, they will also seek ways to serve within their churches, their communities and especially to serve other vulnerable women and children to the glory of Christ. The church appears to be losing her voice in the hearts and minds of this generation, but something we are certain of, in the words of the imprisoned apostle Paul, the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. (2Timothy2:9b-10) The first conference of GFS Rwanda was conducted at the EAR Kigali diocese on the 12th/12/2015. The conference was attended by 205 girls from 12years of age above and 5 Mothers Union members.

The participants came from different parishes of the Anglican church of Rwanda as well as other Pentecostal churches.

The conference started at 9:00am with praise and worship songs by the GFS worship team from St. Etienne cathedral The opening speech of the day was to introduce very clearly GFS and to explain why GFS in Rwanda Rev. Winnies Muvunyi is the one who started this idea and she is the one who began this ministry here in Rwanda so she was the one explaining and it was very interesting to all girls who were there.

On the agenda we had 3 topics to share that were led by mother's union members, those topics are:-SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD, -DEVELOPMENT AND REPRODUCTION.

The first topic was: SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Mathew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

This topic was shared by Kari Hanlon a member of mothers union she was focusing that even if there is unlimited things that we need to achieve especially girls there is the main important thing that we have to think, love and seek with all our hearts and strength before anything else which is the kingdom of God and his righteousness, she also mentioned that without the kingdom of God anything else that we can do can be evil and unblessed as we are the children of God and he is our master so we need his word and guides to be productive in every day's life.

The second topic: Development,

In this session we invited Ramba Faith and she talked about positive attitude in self development, hard work and trusting God in all things we do, her idea was to first develop yourself in mind and to understand very well your visions and missions so that you know where to start and which way to follow, it was very interesting to listen the word of God telling us how to achieve on a stable and long-term development starting from a very little things that we already have. She also talked about how to start small businesses and she gave different testimonies about people who started from a very small capital like her but now they have become very important and powerful people.

There after we conducted workshops or groups discussions where we had 5 groups and the questions were as follows

1. What would it look like for you to seek the kingdom of GOD first in changing world?
2. What is self-development?
3. What hinders self-development?



Had a lunch together and we shared it with mother's union

4. How and in what ways can we achieve self-development as GFS?

Members defined self development by giving personal understanding about the term and about hindrances of self development we concluded that illiteracy, gender based violence, lack of innovative ideas, sickness, poverty and many more are among the causes. And we achieve self development by first understanding who we are and what we want and after starting small

businesses, saving and exchanging ideas on agricultural output as back bone of our economy. About seeking the kingdom of GOD we would find it as interesting as it gives us faith and a

hope for the future and giving us hope that the Lord knows all about our future and needs.

After this session every member had a clear picture of what GFS is all about because all members participated in this workshop and most views were shared.

The third session was about Reproductive health held by Mugabo Jackline and Mary Mutabazi.

These teaching also caught girls attention where by the speaker were trying to get general understanding of moral behaviour towards sexuality. Girls were urged to keep open relationships before marriage and avoid indulging in sex before they are ready to have children by preventing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted.



ACHIEVEMENTS

The first achievement made was that two girls accepted Christ as a personal savior and king.

All girls understood the purpose of GFS and they were so excited to serve

Jesus through GFS which was a very good beginning and a very strong encouragement.

We had powerful and inspiring moments of pondering the word of God and understanding Gods sole for purpose on this ministry

We created a bond between girls and old mothers and also a bond between girls were created

We understood that seeking the world of God is the best starting of self development

Every one there went with a passion of developing their selves and us also we accepted that we will continue to advice and help them. More to that the conference was successful as it achieved its objectives.

GFS SIERRA LEONE

Theme

“We are called to serve through GFS”.

Activities over the past year

The year 2015 had been a dull one, as group activities were put on hold due to precautionary measures against the *ebola* crisis. Nevertheless:

- Bishop Thomas A I Wilson appointed Rev Robertson Curtis, Vicar of St Thomas’ Parish Church, Grafton, as GFS Chaplain.
- Branch thanksgiving, Diocesan thanksgiving, World Day of Prayer services, Diocesan Executive meetings; and a one-day Seminar at St Philip’s Church were held respectively.
- The Executive continued to have audience with the Bishop for consultation and advice on certain issues.
- The Executive identified the Nigeria High Commissioner, H E Quis Adebisi (Mrs.), as a role model, and paid her a courtesy call to acquaint her about the existence and purpose of the GFS. Her reception and the discussions were warm and promising. We intend to keep the line open for further discussion and advice, and possible intervention in future activities related to the reduction of teenage pregnancy.

- The Executive will also continue to identify and approach organisations, institutions and individuals for support in areas relating to the welfare of girls and women. A Diocesan Council was held on 27th November 2015, during which the “Girls’ and Boys’ Friendly Society of Sierra Leone were formally severed to form two separate organisations. The understanding was that both organisations will collaborate in some programmes at Diocesan level when necessary.
- The GFS launched its 50th Anniversary Programme at its 2015 Africana Service on 29th November, at St Augustine’s Parish at Hill Station in Freetown. A “Golden Jubilee Project Fund” for the construction of a GFS House was the main highlight of the launching.

Achievements

Two GFS and three BFS branches were respectively inaugurated in Parishes out of Freetown before the severance. Requests have been received from two other Parishes for GFS Branches to be inaugurated.

Except for increased membership, much was not achieved other than the hope that topics covered at the Diocesan Seminar and messages preached at thanksgivings Sunday after Sunday, had fallen on listening ears.

Challenges

The present educational timetable leaves limited time for Branch work, especially training in arts and crafts through which we could display some talents. Most of the members are school-going, in afternoon shifts and compulsory Saturday classes.

Constraints

- Permanent accommodation for the Society’s business remains a constraint. It is 49 years since the existence of GFS in the Anglican Diocese of Freetown and yet no administrative space or storage facility for safe records keeping.
- Lack of transportation facility is also affecting expansion, monitoring, visitation and outreach to distant Parishes and communities.
- Inadequate financial and material resources limit our capacity to implement certain activities. We are looking for opportunities to capacitate the GFS to undertake activities towards addressing teenage pregnancy and other negative adolescent issues.

Coming events

- Golden Jubilee Anniversary:
- A programme of activities culminating in a “Great Thanksgiving Service” on 23 October 2016 has been planned to celebrate and raise funds to commence the first phase of a five-year Golden Jubilee Project - “Construction of a GFS House” - which will provide administrative space and other facilities. With the blessing of the Bishop, Rt Rev Thomas A I Wilson, the Diocese is considering ways and means of providing a suitable environment for the Project site.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, I am pleased to inform colleagues that we did not lose any member to the *ebola* outbreak till WHO declared Sierra Leone *ebola* free. It was unfortunate that a couple of days ago, a new case was reported in Sierra Leone, just hours after West Africa was declared *ebola* free. We continue to pray against a return of the outbreak.
- Finally, on behalf of GFS Sierra Leone and on my personal behalf, I wish to express our appreciation to the leadership and team who are working relentlessly to sustain the World Council and GFS worldwide. The effective exchange of information is keeping members connected globally. May God continue to strengthen and protect you all, as you travel around for the furtherance of the service of GFS in His vine yard.
- For countries whose weak national economy impacts harshly on individual budgets, I pray that

God will continue to make a way where there is no way so that members will enjoy the benefits of GFS in their various situations. Nevertheless, GFS Sierra Leone is committed to keep GFS alive, despite the effect of the discouraging foreign exchange rate.

- I wish World Council and global membership a happy, healthful, and progressive 2016 onwards.

Alberta E Bindi
Diocesan President

GFS HONDURAS

Delores writes within her article - **The Rev. Connie Sanchez** is the GFS advisor of our Honduras branches. I am delighted to say that three branches in different churches are holding GFS meetings and activities. The Rev. Connie is a priest in the Episcopal Church in Honduras and a servant in the service of the Lord, She feels so blessed to have heard his call and serve working on his harvest with passion, with commitment and above all with love, she loves working in evangelistic workshops as Cursillo, spiritual retreats, happening (evangelism workshop for young people); New Beginnings (for Juniors) Living Stones (for children), it is wonderful to see how the power of God changes and transforms lives she says.



Currently she also is the Executive Director of AANGLIDESH (Anglican Development Agency of Honduras) where she has developed a social, humanitarian and spiritual work in the service of others especially the needy. The Rev. Connie says "Thank you Jesus for filling my life with your holy presence, your guidance and your love and GFS". You are the Lord and Savior of my life.

GFS NEW ZEALAND

Greetings from New Zealand

We have important news to announce to our worldwide GFS community. I am very pleased to announce that Helen Allen, whom you will remember from three previous World Councils, has agreed to be the new president of GFS NZ. She will be the acting president until our AGM in August.

I have enjoyed the role as president working with a Council of eight skilled and talented women. It has also been an exciting time, being involved in the development of GFS in a new direction progressed over the last sixteen years.

We met together for the first time this year on Wednesday, 17 February. It was a joy to catch up with each other and to share our news. It is also important to tie up loose ends and ensure we are ready for the New Year. University courses start in late February.

This year we have seventeen students on the programme and they come from Pakistan, Ethiopia, China, Cambodia, Afghanistan, The Pacific Islands, and New Zealand. They are studying at different institutions and are doing a wide variety of courses.



During 2015 Maria finished her course at Fashion Tech where she learnt all the skills required to create clothes for the fashion industry. I attended her graduation and was proud of her success. She showed persistence and courage and worked hard. She is now living in a flat and is an independent woman with lots of goals, hopes and dreams. Heather graduated as a nurse and is working in a big city hospital. We met regularly for four years and it was a wonderful moment when she found her first job. She is loving her career. Last year was Melanie's first year of study. She works fourteen hours a week in a stationery shop as well as taking a fulltime university course. Most of the money goes to her mother to pay back her hostel fees. She needed reassurance and encouragement when she missed a paper but I am confident she will succeed. Ziming has now completed her scholarship and wrote the following acknowledgement:

"Thank you so much once again for the lovely present, as well as all of the support you, the rest of GFS, and the former award winners have given me through the past three years. It's been an extremely humbling and valuable experience, both to enter university with the support of such a wonderful community, and to meet with and share with inspiring girls and women whom I was able to aspire towards. I cannot believe it has already been three years, and it's going to feel extremely weird to no longer have our meetings! However, I will definitely not forget the memories I have made with GFS, as well as all of the amazing people I have met. I'll definitely remember to keep in touch, and please don't hesitate if you ever need anything from me, as I would be more than happy to help out GFS, as well as any future recipients!"

Every student has a history of hardship and struggle. They do not have the advantages of most young women. It is a privilege to watch them succeed. JANET WAITE, President.

GFS USA

Greetings from GFS/USA:

THE "SUPER BOWL of CARING has become a powerful movement in the United States that has transformed the time around the Big Football Game into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving. Through this mission, young people learn what it's like to make a positive difference in the world as they collect food, raise money and volunteer to work in charities that provide shelter to the homeless, food to the hungry and compassion to those in need. Many of our branches hold a Super Bowl Sunday at their church where they will collect donations of non-perishable food items or serve soup after mass for a donation that can be forwarded for the cause of serving others less fortunate themselves. "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those without a bowl of soup to eat."

As always in the month of October GFS branches devote the month to service within their communities, and churches and many branches participate in UNICEF "Trick-Or-Treat for Halloween. This National/United Nations Program began in 1950 to help children who need more than candy. Branches joined the cartoon charters, Charlie Brown, Snoopy and the Peanut movie gang by helping children with their donations All children deserve to live happy and healthy lives. By are girls making a contribution no matter how small it might be it is added to the other donations to give the world's most vulnerable children the nutrition,



water, and medical supplies they so desperately need. Just think! \$5.00 a day can provide food for five days, \$15.00 can provide a year's worth of clean water to a child. Isn't this what GFS is all about teaching our girls responsibility, important of sharing, being a positive individual and becoming a caring Christian women.

I had previously mentioned in one of our articles that we in the United States are honored to have Honduras and the Dominican Republic join our GFS family. I recently received photos of their girls also servicing others.

I like to end with keeping all our GFS sisters near and across the seas in prayer in our troubled world. May we be ever mindful of those girls and women who are suffering from abuse. I will again attend some sessions at the United Nation Commission on the Status of Women Conference in New York City USA and pray with women around the world to "stop" this abuse against them.

Submitted by Delores M. Alleyne, National GFS/USA President

GFS Sri Lanka

Highlight: Historic visit of Tegan Hudson (World Youth Officer from GFS Australia) and Sara Rademacher (GFS USA). For the first time, we played host to two young members from distant lands who enthusiastically participated in our activities, were excellent ambassadors for the GFS and made an impact on church, community and youth.

Church related

- Morning Service at St Michael's Church, Colombo- Sermon by Tegan, NT Lesson read by Sara (*Thanks to Ven Chrisantha Mendis, Vicar*)
- "Voices in Praise" organized by SCM of Ladies' College, Colombo, premier Anglican girls' school- Tegan shared her testimony
- Morning Assembly with Holy Communion at same College- Message by Tegan
(*Thanks to Ms Eesha Speldewinde, Principal, Rev Melvin de Silva, Chaplain*)



Community

- Centre for Girls with Intellectual Disabilities, project of the Diocese of Colombo- Tegan and Sara enjoyed craft work with the girls. (Our GFS sends a volunteer to the Centre once a week)
- St. John's Home, Moratuwa - run by the Sisters of St. Margaret (Anglican Order of Nuns)- A few happy hours with 20 girls who presented a traditional dance item for the benefit of the visitors. Then, songs, gifts from Santa, games and..... cricket! (promised to Sara)
- GFS Pre-Christmas Table Sale - a great success, maybe due to the presence of the visitors!

Youth Affairs

- Get-together with **Pink Pearls** - The second gathering of the PPs with 26 girls present. Tegan and Sara spoke about GFS in their countries and their involvement. (Update- PPs meet regularly to play badminton)

Fellowship

- GFS Members' Christmas Party, held early in honour of the visitors - children's nativity, games, carols, Santa, gifts, talk by Tegan.
- Trip down South to Bentota/Elpitiya with a few PPs - morning on the beach, dipping one's feet in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean (sorry, no swimming!), visit to a turtle hatchery, relax at a country bungalow followed by a rice and curry meal served on a banana leaf in farming community style, beside a small stream in a woody area.
- Trip to Kandy with Executive Council members - From the lowlands of Colombo, passing paddy fields, hills and tea bushes, mountains in the distance, to the historic capital of the hill country.... (now chaotic with traffic!). On the way, a stop at Pinnawela to see the elephants bathing in the river (Sara and Tegan got real close). In Kandy, a tourist "must"- a visit to the *Dalada Maligawa* and then to a guest house in the misty hills for lunch.



Some regular activities

- A glimpse of our ballet, tatting, jewellery making classes
- Helping to make pancakes filled with scraped coconut and sugar syrup, a popular tea time snack made every Thursday and sold at a nominal rate.

Culture

- A little bit of sightseeing • Visit to *Ape Gama*, model village • Visit to a Buddhist Temple

Thanks to Tegan and Sara for visiting and to Val and others who made it possible.

The Future- Please pray for our GFS, especially the **Pink Pearls** group.

God bless the GFS worldwide!

Jeanne Withanage - President

GFS ENGLAND AND WALES

At the end of 2015 Joy Lauezzari, Director of GFS England and Wales took early retirement. Joy had been involved with GFS for 25 years in various roles and was proud of what GFS has achieved in working with girls and young women.

At present the Trustees are working with staff and volunteers to review the work of GFS in England and Wales. We recently held a successful "Shaping the Future Day" where volunteers, members and staff came together to talk about what works well for us, what makes us proud to be part of GFS and what changes we would like to see to make our Society better, relevant and growing. We know there are challenging and exciting times ahead and would value the thoughts and prayers of our worldwide friends.

GFS Wales

Greetings from Wales! As I write we have just enjoyed two lovely bright sunny, frosty days with the tops of the Black Mountains covered in snow. This to me is real winter rather than the wet and windy weather we have had for a while now! There are signs too that Spring is on its way as some of the daffodils in the lane by my house are starting to flower. The daffodils serve as a reminder that it is almost St. David's Day - 1st March. Many of our girls will no doubt be dressing up and taking part in an Eisteddfod to celebrate. An Eisteddfod is a festival of culture which can involve music, literature and performance such as dancing. Some of the girls may well wear Welsh Costume but many are as likely to wear rugby jerseys!

This term leading up to Easter is short as Easter is early this year but no doubt our girls will hear again the Easter message - for some GFS is the only place they hear this. It is difficult to explain why we have the dark days of Lent before the glorious celebration of Easter Day when to some Easter means chocolate eggs and hot cross buns. But try we must and who knows what seeds may be sown.



At the end of February we will be saying goodbye to Rachel Matthews, our Branch Work Development Worker as she leaves us for a new job. Rachel has made many contacts and achieved much during her time with us. We wish her well in her new role but we won't be losing her completely as she plans to become a member!

The Welsh members will come together at the end of February for our Council meeting. Our morning will be spent undertaking Safeguarding training before holding our meeting in the afternoon when we will plan the activities for the year. Earlier this year the members of Brecon branch attended the pantomime in our theatre when they were thrilled to see their branch leader on stage. Here is a photo of them with Hannah and some members of the cast of Little Red Riding Hood

With love & blessings from all in Wales
Catriona

GFS Ghana

We just finished another activity on "building together a crime-free world children and the youth". G.F.S in Ghana are working on this project to get more girls to go out there to make differences in more girls' lives because the youth are being used and trained to be arm robbers. These are some of the pictures of our activities of last quarter 2015

We joined up in the mothers union 16 days activism with root march, talks on violence against women and girls,



Prayer thoughts for March 2016

Week beginning 6th March

We pray for our many GFS countries, those near to us, our buddy neighbours and those far away from us. Let us be united in our prayers for each other and for the work of GFS throughout this world. While we spend much of our time focussed on our own country, give us a heart to consider those who live in different circumstances to us, from those who are new to GFS and those who have enjoyed it for many decades.

Week beginning 13th March

We pray especially for England and Wales as they choose a new English President and move forward with a new Board of Trustees. We pray for wisdom to choose those who desire to serve you Lord to further your Kingdom and help to disciple new girls and women. We pray for Ayumi Umase from Osaka diocese as she begins her new role as GFS President for Japan. We pray for strength and courage through you Lord to help her to fulfil this role.

Week beginning 20th March

As we move from Palm Sunday to Easter day let us walk through the pain and suffering endured for us so that we might have eternal life. *Risen Lord you brought confusion to the guards at your tomb but joy to your disciples, grant me the fullness of joy as I serve you in spirit and truth.*

Week beginning 27th March

We pray for our friends in Sri Lanka enjoying the success of the recent visit by Sara and Tegan in 2015 and give thanks for the warmth of their welcome and the many opportunities to speak about GFS to the groups. We thank you for GFS in the Philippines and for the faithful ones working there. We thank you for Betty Kesaka as she takes on a new role coordinating GFS Melanesia in the Solomon Islands. We pray for girls in New Zealand beginning their year at university with the mentoring from NZ GFS. We pray for all leaders of the countries and those who support them in executive roles.



Prayer thoughts for April 2016

Week beginning 3rd April

We pray for the work of GFS in the World Project in Japan. We pray for the successes of the sewing groups and that they will find an easy market for their produce and in turn be encouraged by this. We pray for those who seek to give the children their moments of joy in a bleak time. We thank you for the generosity of donations and all who have taken time to raise this money. We pray for the Travel fund as it too needs a boost of donations to help many to make the journey to Perth Australia in 2017. We pray for cheerful givers to bless others through their donations.

Week beginning 10th April

We pray for the GFS of Southern Africa as they consider their preparations for their term to support Thembeke as the next World President. We pray for a continued eagerness and readiness to share the good news of GFS.

Week beginning 17th April

We pray for all girls who belong to GFS, for the very young as they begin their journey and pray that it will be a lifelong one knowing the presence and power of Jesus in their lives. We pray for the leaders entrusted with the regular task of leading girls to know more deeply their Saviour. We give thanks for the older members of GFS who can boast of many years of knowing of the joy of GFS and help to share and encourage the younger members.

Week beginning 24th April

We pray for the sick, lonely, those in hardships and turmoil in their lives, for those in need of our care, for our homes that they might be places of refuge and comfort, places into which we invite Jesus to be head of the family and we put our trust in Him. For those in our families who do not yet know Jesus and live without the knowledge of his perfect love.



Prayer thoughts for May 2016

Week beginning 1st May

We pray this week for the World Team – for Val as she considers the many tasks before her. We pray for her family that they may be kept healthy and for their support in helping out. We pray for the World Team, especially for the gifting of the Chaplains in their encouragement and wisdom to support and underpin the work of Val and the team. We pray for wise decision making as the time for council draws near.

Week beginning 8th May

We pray for Val as she travels to South Africa to visit Thembeke. We pray for a time of real blessings to both as they strengthen their friendship. We thank you for the opportunity to meet in love and friendship. We pray for them as they travel and for those whom they meet along the way.

Week beginning 15th May

We take up the challenge offered in GFS USA to wear a simple bracelet of 8 beads. Each bead is a reminder to perform a good deed during the day to help another person. We ask that we might seek out others to serve, to help, to listen to them, to consider their needs before our own and truly find ways to bless our friends and neighbours.

Week beginning 22nd May

We pray for the progress of world council. As the time draws near we are well aware of the many tasks ahead as forms are being prepared, the program developed, guest speakers invited and waiting for so many more details to come together. Be with all those who make decisions and for those who are anticipating their time together in 2017.

Week beginning 29th May

As the seasons change we think of the changes we have endured in our own lives. We give thanks for these changes and that through all the difficulties and the excitement; we have the certainty of a Loving Father alongside us. As we see Spring approach we give thanks for the new opportunities waiting before us and ask for a spirit of excitement to embrace them. If we see the signs of Autumn we pray that we will recognise the time of settling into the waiting time before new life begins again is upon us. We pray for patience as we wait and a renewal of our strength.



**CUT OFF DATE FOR NEXT
NEWSLETTER 15TH MAY 2016**

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**GFS
World theme
Prayer
2014-2017**

**Gracious Lord, guide our
footsteps of faith that we might
walk in your grace and wisdom as
we act to serve you. Rekindle
afresh in us our spiritual gifts that
we might transform ourselves and
others, serving the whole body of
Christ through GFS. Make us
worthy of our calling to service,
through Jesus Christ
our Lord.
AMEN**

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