

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

THE STAR FLASH

APRIL 2026 #12

THE WORLD GIRLS' FRIENDLY SOCIETY

ANCIENT ROCK FORTRESS, SIGIRIYA, SRI LANKA





1ST - 9TH JULY • RAMADA BY WYNDHAM, COLOMBO 03

WE'RE EXCITED TO FINALLY MEET YOU!

WORLD TEAM 2023 - 2026

PRESIDENT - JEANNE WITHANAGE
SRI LANKA

SECRETARY - LYDIA KUGLER
USA

ASST. TREASURER - CANON VAL GRIBBLE, ML
AUSTRALIA

PROJECT COORD. - ROHINI RATNAM
SRI LANKA

MEMBER - ROSHAN PERERA
SRI LANKA

WORLD COORD. - HEPHZIBAH DAVID
SRI LANKA

VICE PRESIDENT - THEMBEKA PAMA
SOUTH AFRICA

TREASURER - NIMALEE GAJASINGHE
SRI LANKA

PROJECT COORD. - LOIS FRANKFORTER
USA

PROJECT COORD. - ALISON JACKSON
IRELAND

MEMBER - DAPHNE JEBAMANI
SRI LANKA

WORLD ASST. - VINALDI PERERA
SRI LANKA

CHAPLAIN - REV. NIROSHAN DE MEL
SRI LANKA

GFS WORLD THEME & LOGO

2023- 2026

STRONG FOUNDATION

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness”.

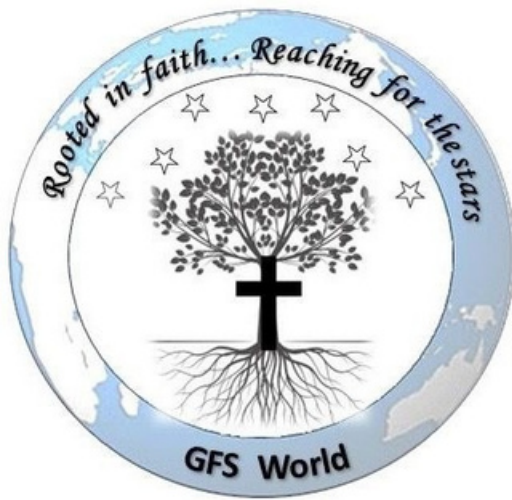
- Colossians 2 : 6 - 7

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE LOGO

A healthy tree rooted in Christ (the Cross) with its branches reaching upward towards the (seven) stars.

Seven Stars

In the Bible, Number 7 symbolizes divine completeness, perfection and wholeness



GFS WORLD GOALS

2023 - 2026

Spiritual Development & Spreading the Good News

“For when I preach the Gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach.
Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel”.
- 1 Corinthians 9 : 16

I

UN Sustainable Development Goal 3

Good Health & Well-Being
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Point 3.5

Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies”.
- 1 Corinthians 6 : 19-20

II

UN Sustainable Development Goal 4

Quality Education
Ensure inclusive & equitable quality education & promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Point 4.4

Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs & entrepreneurship.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction”.
- Proverbs 1 : 7

III

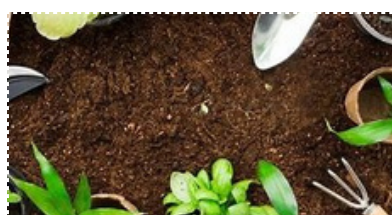
CONTINUING PROJECTS



UN Sustainable Development Goal 13

CURBING OF CLIMATE CHANGE BY CARING FOR CREATION

Climate Action



UN Sustainable Development Goal 12

THE GREENING PROJECT: FOOD GARDEN FOR FOOD SECURITY & ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Responsible Consumption
and Production



UN Sustainable Development Goal 5

ENDING ABUSE OF WOMEN & CHILDREN

Achieve gender equality and
empower all women and
girls

A Fond Farewell

Dear members and friends around the world,

The 25th GFS World Council in Sri Lanka is just 2 months away, and as my tenure of service in GFS World draws to a close, I would like to share my heartfelt gratitude with you all.

It has been a joy working with girls and women like you from over 30 countries, and I have learned so much along the way. Although far away, I have been inspired by your faith and dedication, amazed by your strength and resilience and deeply touched by your love, kindness and concern for me.

I have tried to do my best for the organization that means so much to all of us. I have come full circle - from a very junior member running around GFS headquarters in my home country, through maturity and growth to serving as country President, and finally, to being your World President - the greatest honor this organization has bestowed on me, which I humbly accepted three years ago. As I now relinquish my position, I trust that I have been of some support to you all in a meaningful way.

I hope the quarterly issues of “The Star Flash” helped in connecting us all from the farthest corners of the world. Thanks for sharing news from your country so that others can learn and follow.

Our theme, “Rooted in faith... reaching for the stars,” has been a guiding light in my journey and I trust that each of you will continue to reach for the stars in your own lives and missions.

Let us aim high, for we serve a great God, but always stay rooted in faith - because that keeps us steady and strong. Let us continue to shine brightly, support one another, care for one another and give of ourselves to make the world a better place.

Thank you all for the privilege of serving with you. Keep reaching higher - the best is yet to come!

Farewell and “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace ...” (Romans 15:13)

Jeanne Withanage
GFS World President
2023 - 2026



**Australia
Awards
'Excellence in Service'**

**PNG Growing
Strong Despite
Challenges**

**Ireland
Marks
the 1966 Reform**

**South Korea
Unites at Junior
Camp**

**Kenya's Income
Generation
Workshop**

**South Africa's
Renewal of
Vows**

**New Zealand
Building
Bonds**

**Sri Lanka's
Footwear
Making
Programme**

**Cameroon's
Bold
Evangelism**

**GFS WORLD HIGHLIGHTS
BROUGHT TO YOU BY
THE STAR TREE!**

READ . SUPPORT . PRAY . LEARN . ENCOURAGE . SHARE

GFS AUSTRALIA

Our greatest joy over this period was to finally have an opportunity to meet in-person at our National Gathering held in January. We have had few times following COVID to enjoy a venue where we could all stay and participate in celebrating our heritage and look toward our hope for the future. The celebration of 150 years was a large part of our Gathering. We welcomed a guest speaker who guided us through finding our stories of past times, using them as an encouragement and a joy to hold and leaves us wanting to record and share these stories.

We shared times of reflection on the past, especially as reports were presented for our Annual Meeting, and we look forward to our future with hope and gratitude. We also shared lots of food and times of worship, chatting and fellowship around crafting times. On our final night we dressed in our best blue and cut the celebration cake.

We were delighted to present our inaugural badge for “Excellence in Service” to Val Gribble. Val has worked tirelessly over her lifetime in GFS to promote and encourage GFS in many places. Notably is her move to introduce GFS in PNG, bringing along all of GFS in Australia to also value these links with our closest neighbour.

GFS in Australia has benefited from Val’s time on the National Executive in nearly every possible role, with Val serving as Chairman with her theme “Looking In, Moving out” from 1991 until 1994. We were immensely proud of her time as World Chairman from 2014 until 2017. Val continues to promote GFS, stirring up those who might try to ignore us. She is living out her life serving others, putting into practice her faith that draws strongly from the words in James exhorting us to put our deeds in place to match our faith.

Julie Somerville
President – GFS Australia



All in blue as we celebrated with a 150th Anniversary Dinner.



Celebration Cake.



Val’s inaugural badge for “Excellence in Service”.

GFS CAMEROON

This quarter has been marked by fellowship, service, learning, and spiritual growth. We have seen the Lord's grace at work among our girls, strengthening them to shine as ambassadors of Christ wherever they go.

1.Valentine's Day Hangout - A Celebration of Love, Purpose & Sisterhood: On February 14th, the GFS family across the diocese gathered for an inspiring program to teach girls the true meaning of love from God's perspective. Emphasis was placed on self-worth, godly friendships, purity, and Christ-centered confidence, through bonding, fun, games, interactive talks and sessions on building healthy relationships. Many girls said that the program helped them feel valued, uplifted and more grounded in their identity in Christ.

2.GFS Witnessing Weekend - Reaching Out, Serving, and Shining for Christ. Girls from different parishes came together for a weekend of:

Evangelism

From homes to marketplaces and public areas, our girls boldly shared the message of Christ. They prayed with families, offered scriptures of hope and testified of God's goodness. It was a reminder that the Gospel is alive in us, and every GFS girl has a voice that can lead others to Christ.

Sanitation & Community Clean-Up

We engaged in sanitation exercises, contributing to cleaner and healthier surroundings. This taught the girls that caring for God's creation is part of our Christian duty. It also strengthened our visibility and relevance within the communities we serve.

3.Monthly Meetings - GFS parishes across the diocese held monthly meetings, creating safe spaces for mentoring, learning, discipleship, and growth. They focused on:

- Biblical teachings relevant to girls' everyday challenges
- Character development and moral discipline
- Skill-building sessions and practical knowledge
- Prayers, worship, and fellowship

Parish leaders guided the girls spiritually and emotionally, ensuring they grow into confident, godly young women rooted in Anglican tradition.

Moving Forward with Purpose

We celebrate the commitment, passion, and sisterhood demonstrated by every GFS girl, leader, parish priest, and supporter. Truly, God has been faithful.

Our journey continues, and we remain committed to:

- Empowering girls spiritually and morally
- Building strong Christian values
- Impacting our communities positively
- Growing in unity and love
- Standing firm as witnesses for Christ

Dibo Elango Estelle Bedie
President - GFS Cameroon

GFS IRELAND

Easter Greetings from GFS Ireland,

We are celebrating this Easter in a world that is living on edge. "Faith is when you praise God in the storm" and GFS Ireland marked two special Diamond Anniversaries recently.

On March 21st, I was invited to attend Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe GFS Diocesan Service in Birr.

The service commenced with the lighting of candles representing each Branch in the Diocese with intercessional prayers including a prayer for World GFS President Jeanne Withanage and World Council 2026.

At prize giving time, a special presentation was made to Mrs. Grace Healy acknowledging her service of 60 years as GFS leader in the Diocese. Grace has faithfully served on GFS Central Council too with a determination and passion to keep GFS strong. Grace spent hours this Winter hand embroidering a really beautiful piece which I plan to bring to World Council.

On Palm Sunday, I was invited to Tullanisken Parish Church by Mrs. Pam Simpson, to join Newmills GFS Branch which celebrates their 60th Anniversary. Following closure during War time, Newmills Branch was reformed in 1966 by three ladies, Mrs. Joy Montgomery (guest of honor at the service at 92 years young), Mrs. Ann Patterson (Deceased) and Mrs. Joyce Wilson (Deceased) who shared a vision to share God's love through GFS.

The top table at the formal afternoon tea service, following the service, included Lord Lieutenant for Co. Tyrone, Sir Robert Scott, Lady Christine Eames, Patron of Armagh Diocese GFS, Mrs. Joy Montgomery (founder member of Newmills GFS) Rev. Timothy Eldon, Rector of Tullanisken parish, Sr. Valerie Thom, Chaplain of Armagh Diocese GFS, Mrs. Meta Bell, Deputy Lieutenant for Co. Tyrone and Jacqueline Patterson, daughter of Ann Patterson (dec'd). Following speeches, Mrs. Montgomery and Lady Eames awarded the Craft and Bible Study Awards to the members.

Wishing you the Peace and Joy of the Risen Christ!

Myra Moody

President – GFS Ireland



Candles representing each branch in the Diocese at the Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe GFS Diocesan Service



Newmills 60th Anniversary.

GFS KENYA

Receive warm greetings from GFS Kenya.

We thank God for His faithfulness in the ministry. This quarter, we have continued with our usual activities, including training across various branches.

We also held a special session where girls and boys were taught how to make liquid soap. This initiative aims at income generation as well as supporting families, since the requirements are affordable and easily accessible. Additionally, GFS members had the opportunity to make presentations in their churches during the Bishop's visits, which was very encouraging and uplifting.

I also had the privilege of attending a mental health program. Through my work with both GFS and Mothers' Union, I have encountered many individuals currently facing mental health challenges that require support and understanding. This training was therefore very timely and impactful.

We thank God that GFS is also growing in the Diocese of Mumias. Recently, they held a session focusing on purity, spirituality, and child abuse awareness - key areas in nurturing and protecting our young people. Let us continue to uphold this noble ministry in our prayers.

God bless you all.

Phoebe Atieno Maina
President - GFS Kenya



GFS NEW ZEALAND

We have spent the last couple of months getting to know the new GFS scholarship girls, reconnecting with our existing students and ensuring the correct scholarship payments are made to the right tertiary institutions for all of them. It's quite a task to organise this, and I'm always grateful for the work Gillian Steel, our Treasurer, puts in to ensure this happens without a glitch.

The first quarter of every year is always a special time, as it's usually the first extended conversation our new students have with their GFS Council mentor and the girls learn how they'll be cared for and supported as they study. During this period, we start to build our relationship with them, and warmly welcome them to the GFS family. It's important they understand they'll have both a local GFS woman to talk to and that they're now also connected to a global Anglican network of women who are committed to their growth.

As a mentor, I love finding out what they are studying, what their circumstances are and what motivates them to do well. They all have interesting back stories and they amaze and inspire us with their grit and grace.

As President of GFS, here in New Zealand, I also enjoy talking and praying with the other members of the Date Palm Group in preparation of attending our World Conference in July. In particular, it's been wonderful getting to know Trinette Cosbert (from Guyana) and Rohini Ratnam (from Sri Lanka). We've shared a lot about GFS over our WhatsApp video calls and knowing I'll be able to meet them and so many of my other GFS sisters at World Conference is very special. While we may live thousands of kilometres apart, there's much which unites us. Blessings to you all.

Christine Mutch
President - GFS New Zealand



*Sri Lanka
Awaits You!*

A photograph showing several hands of different skin tones clasped together in a circle, symbolizing unity and prayer. The background is a textured, dark blue surface.

A MORNING OF *Prayer*

FOR THE 2026 GFS WORLD COUNCIL
IN SRI LANKA

16th of May 2026

10.00 AM - 11.30 AM SL Time

Pray where you are...

GFS PNG

He is Risen Indeed, Hallelujah! Such a privilege to celebrate with GFS Worldwide news of our Christian journey through the Lent season and being mindful of our Prayers for Peace in the Middle East war.

PORT MORESBY DIOCESE: Defense Chaplain Fr. Benstead Bareta and GFS Mother Barbara M. Bareta from Eagles Wing ATW Chapel saw congregations participate in various activities from Ash Wednesday, washing of 12 disciples' feet, Last Supper leading up to Good Friday Stations of the Cross, Easter Vigil and Resurrection Service on Sunday. My family and I participated at International Universal Church Crusade on Sunday. Theme: "Power & Miracles with the Family at the foot of the Cross". Participants received a bottle of Blessed Oil.

POPONDOTA DIOCESE: Congratulations on their opening service by GFS Chaplain Fr. Luke Korewa who conducted the fresh elections and witnessed the newly elected executives on Thursday, 26 February 2026 (after the passing of its President in August 2025). Welcome to President Helen Gaso and her team to our GFS worldwide family to continue the journey in this wonderful ministry and prayerfully roll out their program for the year.

KOKOPO NGI DIOCESE: Despite financial challenges and weather pattern of travel from Island to Island against rain, strong wind and rough sea, Solomon Islands NGI President Estella Tawasu with the support of Parish Priest Fr. Francis Tawasu, our Consultants and the Coordinator's office admitted 22 new girls from her Diocese. This was followed by awareness of GFS, Bible Study, cooking and baking lessons.

DOGURA DIOCESE: A warm welcome to our new GFS representative Dorothy Modudula.

A special word of appreciation to GFS Consultants and GFS Australia for their continued support in gifts and kind to GFS PNG.

Girika-Raga Sanata

National Coordinator - GFS PNG



GFS POM - Eagles Wing Chapel Sunday School children in the "Garden of Gethsemane" set up by GFS/MU Mother Barbara Bareta.

International Women's Day.



GFS NGI Diocese - 22 new admissions with Mother Estella and Fr. Bevern.

GFS Popondota Diocese new executives.



GBFS SOUTH AFRICA

Greetings from GFS and BFS family in South Africa.

It has been a vibrant and joyous beginning of the year, here. Our dioceses including parishes commenced this new season with fulfilling, educational and spiritual activities.

During the beginning of the year, it is a norm that many dioceses organize an occasion for the renewal of vows preceded by a spiritual retreat for both members and leaders. This is done to renew our commitment to our Saviour, Jesus Christ and revive our unwavering commitment to the Word.

The Lent season was commemorated with drama performances including an enactment of the Ten Commandments. Our very young members were in special services given opportunities to preach to the congregation. There were also some joyful and playful activities during this time.

We also admitted new members during Easter; we hope and pray that their journey will be most fulfilling with spiritual growth while navigating life's challenges through Christ our Lord.

The Lord be with us all as we continue to grow in this Ministry!!!

Rebotsamang Shago

President - GBFS South Africa



GFS SOUTH KOREA

New Year Gathering

On January 10, GFS Korea held its first gathering of the year at the Seoul Anglican Cathedral Church. Led by three women priests, we offered a New Year's service, followed by a small concert by the Anglican Singers. After lunch, we watched a video reflecting on our activities of 2025, giving us an opportunity to look back on our journey together. We also enjoyed playing Yutnori, strengthening fellowship among members. It was a meaningful time to support each other and renew our faith.

GFS Junior Camp

From February 6 to 7, the Seoul Diocese GFS Junior Camp was held at Onsu-ri Church in Ganghwa. A total of 18 junior members and 17 senior members participated, accompanied by Rev. Lucia Hani Kang. During the camp, we learned about the history of Anglican mission work in the area. It was a meaningful time of unity, bringing together different generations within GFS.

16th Anniversary of Café Grace

On March 12, we gathered to celebrate the 16th anniversary of Café Grace. Priests offered blessings for the café and shared words of encouragement. We thank God for allowing us to continue supporting North Korean refugee women safely over the past 16 years. We pray that Café Grace will continue to serve as a place that connects North and South Korea through God's love and our obedience.

Min Hilda Jinhye

President - GFS South Korea



Cafe Grace -
16th Anniversary.



GFS Korea
Camp.



New Year
Gathering.

GFS SRI LANKA

Greetings from the Resplendent Island!

GFS WORLD GOAL 1 – SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT & SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

IGNITE : Youth Talent Showcase - This event brought together 45 Sunday School children from 7 Anglican churches, providing a dedicated platform for young people to showcase their God-given talents. The show featured singing, dancing, dramatic skills and creative presentations. A guest speaker delivered a powerful and inspiring message, encouraging the children to continue developing their unique gifts.

Diving for Pink Pearls 2026 - This initiative successfully gathered young women for a programme centered on worship, interactive workshops and fellowship. It was strategically designed to cultivate leadership development, personal growth and spiritual enrichment.

GFS WORLD GOAL 3 - QUALITY EDUCATION

Women's Footwear Training Programme - The GFS Regional Centre in Hambantota recently conducted a comprehensive vocational training programme, under expert guidance, focused on footwear production, successfully hosting 22 participants.

By providing high-quality guidance in a supportive environment, the programme enabled participants to build significant technical confidence. This initiative underscores our commitment to fostering economic independence and professional growth for women within the region.

OTHER PROGRAMMES

International Women's Day (IWD) Commemorative Programme - In celebration of IWD, a collaborative commemorative programme was held under the theme "Give to Gain." This event brought together members from the Church of Ceylon Mothers' Union and the GFS, fostering a strong sense of unity and shared purpose.

GFS World President Ms. Jeanne Withanage shared a personal and inspiring account of her "joyful journey" with the GFS.

English for Employment Prospects (EEP) World Project - The last batch of students who participated in this programme conducted by the American College of Higher Education and sponsored by the GFS, were awarded their certificates by Rt. Rev. Nishantha Fernando, Bishop of the Diocese of Kurunegala at a ceremony held in the Cathedral premises.

Rohini Ratnam

President - GFS Sri Lanka



EEP Certificate Ceremony.



International Women's Day.



Women's Footwear Training.



Please send your Offerings and Donations for:
Delegates' Travel (earlier known as World Travel)
The World Project
World President's Travel Fund
The World Emergency Fund to:

Account Name: GFS World Account
Banking Institution: ANZ Bank
Address: Shop 67, Whitford City,
Cnr Marmion & Whitford Avenues
Hillarys - WA 6025
Code : BSB 016 494
Account Number : 392526836
Swift Number : ANZBAU3M

Dear All,

As we come to the close of this newsletter cycle, we would like to take a moment to express our heartfelt appreciation to each of you. It has truly been a joy reading your news, stories and updates, and an honour to bring them together and share them through our publications.

This has been a wonderful journey, made meaningful by your contributions, enthusiasm and continued support. Each article reflected the spirit, dedication and vibrant life of your work and we are deeply grateful for that.

We sincerely thank all the countries that contributed and helped make each issue special. For those who were not able to participate this time, we look forward to staying connected.

As we move forward, we wish each one of you all the very best. May your work continue to flourish, and may you be blessed with good health, strength, joy and peace in Jesus Christ, our Living Savior.

With gratitude and warm wishes,
The GFS Newsletter Team
2023 - 2026

BYE
BYE



Ceylon Tea Plantation



PRAYER CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 2025 – JULY 2026

A Call to Prayer

As we prepare for the GFS World Council 2026, let us unite in prayer, trusting God to guide, provide, and bless every detail. When we pray together across nations, we not only prepare for a conference but also strengthen our fellowship in Christ. May these prayer points draw us closer to God and cover all with His love.

"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."
James 5:16

HAVEN'T RECEIVED YOURS YET?
REACH OUT TO YOUR COUNTRY LEADER!

INTRODUCING THE
WORLD COUNCIL
PRAYER CALENDAR

JOIN US IN A GLOBAL CALL TO PRAYER AS WE PREPARE FOR WORLD COUNCIL 2026. LET'S LIFT EACH OTHER, OUR LEADERS, AND OUR MISSION BEFORE GOD!

Talk To Us

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