



THIS IS

GFS

Known also as

Girls' Friendly Society

Girls' and Boys' Friendly Society

***A ministry of the Anglican
Communion***

This booklet has been prepared to provide information for anyone seeking information about GFS, for use by any person who would like to join the society or for countries or dioceses wishing to commence GFS. It can also be used to give information on GFS to new members.

How did GFS begin?

GFS began in England in 1875 to help young women and girls who were moving to cities and towns for work, (during the Industrial Revolution in England) and without their families for guidance. Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Townsend, our founder, set up a new organisation within the structure of the Anglican church to foster the development of supportive groups to encourage the wellbeing and spiritual guidance of these young but vulnerable women following the four areas of work, study, worship and play.



GFS spread quickly in the United Kingdom and then to other countries as people moved more easily around the world. It was not until 1955 when a group of countries, where GFS was operating, met together on the Isle of Wight in England and formed the first World Council. There were representatives from England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland, USA, Australia, Newfoundland (Canada). The World Council continues to hold a Council meeting every three years.

GFS World Prayer:

We have a GFS Prayer that reminds us of our place in God's world and how we are charged to live in service to God and others.



O God our Father, we thank you for your goodness, love and mercy to all who belong to the Girls' Friendly Society world-wide. Help us to bear one another's burdens as members of one family in Jesus Christ. We ask for your blessing on our members, that we may grow in grace through your Spirit. Help us to know in our lives, the joy of your everlasting love through Jesus Christ you Son, our Lord. Amen.

Motto:

“Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ”
(Galatians 6:2)

Through our motto GFS is an organisation committed to serving others and in bringing others to Christ.

Mission Statement:

GFS Worldwide aims to:

- Promote and support the ministry of GFS around the world through the provision of ministries to children, youth, families and adults in a safe and accepting environment where Christ's love is evident, and the Gospel is proclaimed.
- Through GFS programs and through the specific World Projects:
- respond to human need by serving others through the motto “Bear one another's burdens”.
- Seek to transform unjust structures of society (particularly for women and children)

- Work with other like organisations within the Anglican Communion to strengthen the body of Christ.
- Through a World Executive/Team provide a central focal point for GFS ministries by
 - Receiving and disseminating information
 - Hosting a regular gathering of the world family to share interests, joys and concerns and setting future objectives.

GFS IS WORKING WITH GIRLS, BOYS, MEN, WOMEN WHERE THEY ARE!



Where is GFS active? (As at 2025) - Angola, Australia, Cameroon, Eswatini, England, Democratic Republic Congo, Ghana, Guyana, Ireland, Honduras, Japan, Kenya, South Korea, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi,

Melanesia, Mozambique, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, South Sudan, The Philippines, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, USA, Wales, Zambia,

What is the structure of GFS Worldwide?

Does GFS have a world constitution? No.

Members are bound by the Rules of Management which can be read on the GFS World website: <https://www/gfsworld.org/about-us/rules-of-management>.

World level:

A World Council is held every 3 years when a Senior and Junior delegate from each country is invited to attend (they have 1 vote between them) Any GFS country can apply to be the host country. The application/s are considered at each World Council meeting. The application is for three years ahead (eg at World Council in 2026, the host country for 2029-2032 will be chosen)

World President :

The World President is chosen by the host country and approved at the World Council together with the host country application and she chooses her World Executive Team including a Secretary and Treasurer. Often members from other countries are invited by the World President to be members of the world team.

The World President and her executive team are responsible for managing GFS world matters. The host country is responsible for arranging the World Council, held in their country at the end of their term.

Country level:

Each country should have their own Constitution or Rules of Management. Each country is allowed to manage GFS according to their needs and culture, as part of the Anglican communion, if the ministry reflects the motto and mission statement. The World President communicates with GFS country presidents and they in turn advise members as necessary.

Diocesan level:

If a Diocese is the only diocese in a country which has a GFS ministry, the Diocesan executive would set the rules for the in that diocese, according to the needs of their diocese and reflecting the motto and mission statement. If there are several dioceses in a country with a GFS ministry there should be a provincial structure to set the rules for GFS ministry in the country. Regular training should be held for leaders, using clergy and skilled people in their areas.

Whether at country or diocesan level there should be an executive committee with a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer and any other members required. At all times the Bishop or Archbishop should be aware of the activities of GFS. Quite often, a Chaplain is also a member of an executive committee. The Chaplain is usually appointed by the Bishop or Archbishop.

Is there male membership in GFS?

Yes, in some countries but it is at the discretion of the rules of each country, eg in South Africa the name of the organisation is GBFS (Girls and Boys Friendly Society).

Financial structure:

What fees are paid for membership of GFS?



Every country pays a **world membership fee** of US\$120 every three years. This allows the country to apply for any grants or world projects and to vote at World Council. A reduced fee of \$US90 applies to a new country being admitted to World Council. The World Treasurer will send an invoice to each GFS country towards the end of each three-year term.

Each country decides their own fees for dioceses and/or for general membership.

What other income does the World Council Executive Team receive?

The World fee is the only income received by the World Council Executive Team and there is always a need for gifts and donations to assist with managing GFS world matters.

Who meets the cost of holding World Council in the host country?

The host country is responsible for the cost of holding World Council in their country and the fee set by the host country to attend the World Council is expected to meet the costs of the Council. The host country can also fundraise or seek sponsorship to help with their expenses.

What other monies are held by the World Council?

World Emergency Fund. This fund can be used in any emergency in a country where GFS members are affected. The process for applying is in the *Rules of Management*.

World Delegates Travel Fund. This fund is used to offer travel grants to countries for their delegate to travel to World Council. The World President will ask for donations to this fund during her term and she will be responsible for approving grants.

World President's Travel Fund. This fund assists the World President to travel to other countries or events to promote GFS. The World President will ask for donations to this fund during her term.

Grants Fund. This fund is available for seeding loans for new world projects or for any specific event identified by the World President.

What is a World Project?

At each World Council meeting a new **World Project** is chosen. Application forms are sent to world country presidents inviting applications for long projects of 3 years or 6-month short projects. GFS members around the world fundraise for this project. Some examples are Sri Lanka – providing English lessons to disadvantaged young women to assist them to find employment; Cameroon – setting up sewing project to provide disadvantaged young women to learn new skills and find employment; Democratic Republic of Congo – setting up a Cookery project to provide young women to learn new skills. These three projects, as an example, have led to exciting growth in GFS in those countries.

Which Saint is identified with GFS?

St Michael and All Angels. This day was chosen at the first meeting of the World Council in 1955. Celebrated on 29 September or close to that date. A GFS country is chosen by the World President (usually in alphabetical order) to prepare the World Day of Prayer service, and this is sent to all countries (it is also published on the world website). The offertory taken at a World Day of Prayer service is sent to the World Treasurer for the current World Project or any other project identified by the World President.

How does the World President keep in contact with members?

The World President prepares a world newsletter usually four times a year and invites countries to send information on their activities to be published in the newsletter. The newsletter is sent electronically, and it is the responsibility of the Country President to ensure that the newsletter reaches members.

The World President also contacts members through their respective Country President regarding matters of interest or requiring a response from the country. It is most important that country presidents respond to the communication from the World President.

Link Countries:

At each World Council GFS countries are divided into groups to encourage prayer and practical support for each other.

Usually, 2 or 3 developing countries are linked with a developed country.



MEMBERSHIP

What is the process for commencing a GFS ministry?

New country: GFS is an Anglican organisation and any intent to commence this ministry in a new country should be discussed with the Anglican Archbishop/Bishop of that country. If approval is given contact should then be made with the current World President of GFS (the contact address may be found on the GFS world website – <https://www.gfsworld.org>)

The World President would then advise the person/s on the process to follow.

Usually once a GFS ministry is established, this country would be admitted to the World Council at the next Council meeting.

New Diocese: If GFS is already a ministry of the country but not in a particular diocese, contact should firstly be made with the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese to receive approval to make contact with the provincial GFS organisation in that country or with another Diocese where GFS is operating to seek advice.

Membership criteria:

Can non-Anglicans or people of other faiths or no faith belong to GFS?

This would be a decision for a diocese or province. In some countries membership is open to anyone, in some, members are required to assent in writing to the Nicene Creed, in some, only practising Anglicans are admitted as members. World Executive Team leadership of GFS is only open to practising, female, Anglicans.

Is there an age limit for membership?

Again, this may be a decision at diocesan or provincial level. However, around the world GFS works with many different age groups, eg some have Teddy Bear members (to 6 years of age), some only work with children, some work with teenagers and young women, some work with both male and female children or adult members, some have “Townsend Groups” which are usually older members. Some groups are within schools or universities.

What programs are followed in a GFS ministry?

Programs in many countries have followed the pattern of worship, study, work/service and recreation. (The original pillars of GFS ministry)

Through many different activities GFS endeavours to help members to learn more about commitment to Our Lord and to bring others to Christ, as well as providing a safe and fun environment. Programs include activities of service to others.

Members should be encouraged to learn about GFS in other countries and to support the World Project.

Is there a set uniform for GFS members?



No, each diocese or country may decide on a uniform for formal or informal occasions. Sometimes branches have their own T-shirt for activities. The World logo can be used, and the World President is able to send a copy of the logo.

At World Councils, delegates and observers often wear their national dress for the opening and closing services and other special occasions. Many countries organise their own specific uniform to wear at World Council. The photo – printed as an example - is the formal uniform for Cameroon.

Is there a member's badge?

There is no worldwide badge for members. Originally most countries that used badges would use the GFS shield (example below) which has been used for many decades but countries have adapted badges for their own environment.



The GFS and cross is an adapted badge used by some countries in the southern hemisphere. The World President would be able to direct any enquiries to countries that may allow their badge to be used by other countries.

World logo:

The world logo was chosen through a competition amongst members. It is used by the World President on all world documentation.

Approval must be sought from the World President to use it for publication in GFS countries.



Is there a set Commissioning Service for leaders and members?

No. Some countries have members make various promises around the motto and prayer at their admission, others just welcome members to the Society. The World President can direct countries to other GFS countries which have commissioning and admission services for assistance in planning their own.

Any questions relating to this publication should be directed to the World President.

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