

**The World President's Welcome Address
at the Opening Service of the 25th GFS World Council.
Church of St. Michael & All Angels, Polwatte, Colombo.
July 2, 2026**

For 151 years, the GFS has been a beacon of love, hope, and empowerment to girls and women around the world.

The GFS is not just an organization, but a Ministry inspired by God.

True to our founder's vision, we have raised awareness of gender inequality, abuse and violence. We have cared for the environment, championed education, and fostered leadership in many countries around the world.

We have worked silently, quietly, modestly but with long lasting impact.

Ours is a diverse membership, from east and west, north and south, across different cultures and languages - but we are one family, united in our love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a special year for us in Sri Lanka and we are delighted to host our GFS sisters here in our beautiful island nation at this 25th World Council - to conduct business sessions, worship together, enjoy fellowship, learn and laugh together, and most important, grow together.

And as we learn and grow, may I encourage us all to try something different –
be bold, walk on water, soar like an eagle, jump high and catch a star!

You can do it! We can do it! The GFS is doing it!

Together, as sisters in Christ, we stand strong. Together, we shine brighter. And together, we will continue to make a difference - for today, and for tomorrow, for generations to come, through the ministry of the Girls' Friendly Society !

Jeanne Withanage

