

# GFS WORLD NEWSLETTER



Christmas blessings to all our members and readers

*A Nativity Scene from Bolivia*



## From the President

Greetings to all GFS members and friends of GFS around the world. I write this in the first week of Advent. I enjoy this season with all the challenges of preparing and hoping and waiting for the joy of celebrating the birth of Our Lord. But of course one of the major challenges is committing to spending that extra time in prayer and meditation amidst the busyness of the secular build up to Christmas.

Those who know me well would also know that I collect Nativity sets. It began with sets I found when visiting other countries for World Council, then one of our sons who often works in mines in remote parts of the world started bringing them home and now of course friends who travel often bring back lovely sets for me. Some are on display all year, many I bring out only in Advent and Christmas. Sometimes I am asked to display them at functions. This year I have set up a large Mexican set with lights near to the footpath of our home. I hope it reminds some of the meaning of Christmas as they drive or walk past. And I trust that no one will decide they would like this particular set in their home!!!

I have used pictures of some of them in this newsletter. Many of the nativity sets from other countries remind me of the many GFS members around the world and I hope that the message of Advent and Christmas will bring you all joy and peace.

In Australia we are now approaching or have already approached our long summer school and academic holidays. In the northern part where I live it is hot and dry and dusty. We are in the midst of a very serious drought and the rains are slow in coming. We have just experienced our hottest spring on record. The weather forecast is very grim particularly for the agricultural and cattle areas. It is a matter for serious prayer and financial support in so many parts of eastern Australia. It is certainly a time when GFS members in Australia can find ways to serve others through GFS.

In 2015 I would encourage you all to think carefully on the call to serve through GFS.

The World Team send you their greetings and prayers for a joyous Christmas and for all God's blessings in the New Year. May we see further growth in GFS.

*Val*

# Christmas Messages from our Chaplains

## **Father Isaiah writes from Papua New Guinea:**

We are counting down to Christmas and it's almost here and some of us might be short with money. How are you going to buy presents for all your family members and for your friends too. Well, for a start, Christmas doesn't always mean having to spend lots of money. In fact many years ago this was never even thought of. In the past, people made their presents – and many still do.



Handmade gifts speak many things about yourself and the person receiving the present- something that can't be said with any old gift from the department store. On top of this, it makes preparing for Christmas heaps of fun, especially if you try to be creative. Guessing what's inside the beautiful parcels under the Christmas tree is also a lot of fun too. But the shapes of some presents sometimes makes this guessing very easy, and often spoils all the surprise on the Christmas day when the presents are opened.

And speaking of trees, hung with the wonderful decorations you make yourself, your Christmas tree will be the best dressed in the street or in your living room at the corner somewhere in your house. Which is lucky, because you might be the worst dressed! You see, after eating all the Christmas food you've prepared, your clothes might be a little on the tight side. Perhaps you should have added a New Year diet?

There are many things and people you might think of while approaching this Christmas. However, as GFS members, I encourage you to look back and reflect with prayers and thanks, for those whom you've met, served and supported through the GFS ministry. As St Lorraine once said to the soldiers who came to arrest him – these are the treasures of the Church. Identify yourself in the light of the parable of the Good Samaritan and so much else in the bible, that everyone whom you've met, served and supported in need this year fits in your Christmas gift, not only on the Christmas tree but in your lives too.

We are called to serve God through the GFS ministry but it is much harder to serve others and we really should be able to sort it out ourselves as we approach this coming Christmas with the hope of doing better or improving our ministry next year, 2015. To serve is very humbling for Jesus humbled himself, taking the form of mankind like a little child who came on the Christmas day, not to be served but to serve everyone who loves and believes in him.

May you all have a blessed and merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year, 2015, with your families.

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## **The Revd Cheryl writes from Australia:**

### Finding "No Man's Land": A Christmas Wish

When we look about our world today and listen, if we are able, to daily reports of human's inhumanity to human, I wonder what has happened to the spirit of Christmas. We only have to take in the early morning news to hear of death and destruction in almost every corner of our world.

In the western world we have begun celebrating 100 years since troops left to go to what is now known as WW1. I wish for this Christmas we might also celebrate something else that happened 100 years ago. Something that has intrigued me for years; how soldiers fighting in WW1 created their own cessation of war. They sang Christmas Carols across the trenches and eventually as Christmas

morning broke, climbed out of those same trenches and crossed on to “No Man’s Land,” calling out “Merry Christmas” in their enemies’ native tongues. Sceptical, the Allied soldiers feared it was a trick, but seeing the soldiers unarmed they climbed out of their trenches and shook hands with the enemy soldiers. The men exchanged presents of buttons and food and sang carols and songs. There was even a documented case of soldiers from opposing sides playing a good-natured game of soccer.

What has happened in our world when we have lost the Spirit needed to initiate such a change? Maybe this year we could, in our own way, find a “No Man’s Land.” A place safe enough for all to greet each other in equality and share what gifts, great or small, we have to offer. Certainly “No Man’s Land;” rather sacred ground, one filled with a Spirit of Love, Hope and Peace.

*May the hope of finding sacred ground, where all can stand in awe, bathed in the love of Christ, be yours this Christmas. With my love and prayers,*

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## URGENT, URGENT, URGENT!

Have you commenced fundraising for our new World Project? Asako, the President of GFS in Japan and whom many met in Wales, has told me that GFS has recently visited the Tsunami area which they support and there is an urgent need to purchase some of the sewing machines and sewing materials as soon as possible. She has asked that we forward any monies raised as soon as possible. So I would ask all countries that if they have large amounts (say over \$US1000) they send them to the world account as soon as possible. You will find account details on page of the newsletter.

Asako wrote for this newsletter

*I would like to thank all of our GFS brother and sisters in the world GFS. After memorable world conference in Swansea this summer, we had a moment to think about our new future in Japan GFS with leaders and members in Kobe city.*

*From September, we started to pray with a World Day of Prayer booklet in various Dioceses. It was a good opportunity to appeal GFS activities to church members and rectors. On the other hand, from 13-14 November the member of GFS Tokyo Diocese went to visit “Odatte-Bariide” in Ishinomaki to explain an outline of GFS World Project (2014-2017) and they were very pleased to hear our outreach project had coincidentally become the world project. After collecting their current needs, we decided to collect unnecessary Kimono fabrics and another sewing machine to send it to “Odatte-Bariide”*

National President, Asako Yonamine.



**Tegan, our World Youth Officer will be featuring an article on each of the 2014 World Council Junior Delegates over**



**the next few newsletters. Here is the first.**

Name: Michelle Armitage  
(Junior Delegate Ireland and 2014-2017)

Age: I'm 19 years old.

What do you do with yourself:

I am a second year University student. I'm studying Early Childhood Education and Care (age group from birth to 6 years) in the Institute of Technology Carlow, Co. Carlow, Ireland. I work part-time in a local restaurant as a waitress on the weekends, and I also babysit at the weekends.



How did you first become involved with GFS?:

I first got involved with GFS at the age of 5, as a Junior Candidate. My mum started at this time as a helper too.

What is your current involvement in GFS?:

I am on the Central Council for Ireland GFS as a voting member, and I am also on Diocesan Council. Both meet a couple of times of year. I also help in my local branch and Diocese when I can. I mainly am involved in the events throughout the year; i.e. Camps both Diocesan and All-Ireland, craft days, prize days, fun afternoons, and different services.

What does GFS mean to you and why are you still so involved?:

GFS is at my core, I grew up through GFS, my mum is a leader, my little sister attends also. It's not just an organisation, it's a family. Most of the girls in GFS in my branch I have looked after or babysat, so I know them so well. I feel the work of Girls Friendly Society is amazing, and I feel like I can contribute to that amazing legacy of Mrs Townsend when she founded it. As an adult now I want to do more and more through God and through GFS.

How did World Council in Wales impact you? (what did you learn, how were you inspired):

It impacted more than I thought it would. I went to bed every night at council so much more grateful for everything I had and everyone in my life through GFS everywhere. I learned more about GFS in different countries (Finance etc). I was inspired by the World Project pitch from Japan, I felt really moved and was in tears (as lots were!) as they were asking for our help and I thought that there are serious issues and problems in some of GFS family countries. The money for that project will rebuild people's lives and that itself is something to think about. It has inspired me to do great things when I am finished in University and to continue helping through GFS. I am also excited for the Youth Exchange program and all that comes with it.

If you could give 1 piece of encouragement to other GFS members across the World, what would it be?

I encourage everyone to keep believing and to always remember how blessed we are, even when something goes wrong, because there are always people who are in worse circumstances. Continue to find strength and peace through your faith in God and keep serving in The Girls Friendly Society. All of us are here for each other and never forget it.

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## Resources for Advent and Christmas



## Here are some links to share with members in your country

We acknowledge Brisbane Anglican Youth, Children and Family Ministry newsletter prepared by Jonathan Kemp for the links to these resources. If you would like more information about resources contact our Project Officer, Chris Rooney (see contact page for her contact details)

[Advent Ideas](#) (Going for Growth)  
[Multi-Age Service Ideas](#) (UCA SA)  
[Advent & Christmas Ideas](#) (VicTas UCA)  
[Messy Nativity](#)  
[Messy Christmas](#)  
[The Gingerbread Nativity](#)



# Prayer thoughts for December 2014

## Week beginning 1<sup>st</sup> December

- As we prepare for Advent we look to the new beginnings of our Church year and give thanks for everyday as a new beginning for us. May it be a time to clear a space in the busy world to focus our minds and hearts on all that really matters, to become more like Christ.

## Week beginning 8<sup>th</sup> December

- We pray for all those we know who are ill, lonely, battling hardships and feeling overwhelmed. Remind us that we can take our burdens and give them to God safe in the knowledge that He can 'give us rest' from these worries. We pray for the many known to us in our countries who are suffering ill health.
- We bring before our God those who have had lives lost and live with the real fear of the spread of Ebola. We pray for all who go to offer medical support and for the research that can hold some hope for better treatments and understanding. We pray for our friends in Liberia and Sierra Leone thinking especially of Alberta and her family and friends.
- We pray for Janet in New Zealand as she mourns the loss of her husband after an illness. We lift her up in prayers as we seek God's comfort to surround her at this time. We pray for all who have suffered the loss of special family members, friends and GFS members in recent times.

## Week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> December

- We bring before you our delightful moments to rejoice and sing
  - We give thanks for the wonderful visit by Glenys and David to Sri Lanka as they joined in the celebrations
  - We give thanks for the 110 years of GFS in Sri Lanka, for faithful members and their contribution to spread the good news in this time
  - We welcome new grandchildren and the joy that comes with each one, for their families and the wisdom to guide them in the right ways.
  - We give thanks for the many answered prayers

## Week beginning 22<sup>nd</sup> December

- Christmas *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."* (Luke 2:14)
  - As children we looked with great anticipation to Christmas and all the special treats, now we have grown in our faith we look to Christmas with great thanksgiving for the gift so freely given to us. If grace and mercy can exist across the trenches in the 1914 war, perhaps it could also live in our lives today across the road to neighbours, across our lands between political parties, across nations to find peace.



### **Week beginning 29<sup>th</sup> December**

- New year
  - AS the new year begins we want to fill our days with new starts, to be like we are urged to do in Colossians (3:12) and “clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

## *Prayer thoughts for January, 2015*

### **Week beginning 5<sup>th</sup> January**

- In Australia we will be meeting together for our AGM at our National Council meeting. We will welcome a new Chairman, Gail and her executive into leadership. We pray for all those who have leadership roles within their diocese, their country and at the world level. We pray for guidance, for listening to the voice of God as they make decisions and remembering to serve and work for the good of all.

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### **Week beginning 12<sup>th</sup> January**

- We pray for those who meet regularly each week, never seeking glory for themselves but with a passion to share the gospel with the children who come along. We pray for all leaders, for strength to carry on when it seems difficult, for excitement as they see the world through children’s eyes.

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### **Week beginning 19<sup>th</sup> January**

- We pray for the older members of our organisation who meet as Townsend members. We give thanks for those who fill mentoring roles, passing on their knowledge to nurture and encourage younger ones in their walk.

### **Week beginning 26<sup>th</sup> January**

- In Australia we will celebrate our “Australia day” on January 26<sup>th</sup>. It is a day to give thanks for our country. We think of all that is good in our own countries. We look back on our heritage and the founders of our faithful communities. We pray for peace and safety for every nation. We remember the celebration of “Thanksgiving” in USA. We echo Delores thoughts – *“On this Thanksgiving Day I want to thank My GFS sisters worldwide for touching our lives in some special way and making us realize how precious each one of us is to the Girls' Friendly Society family.”*

## *Prayer points for February 2015*

### **Week beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> February**

We pray for the Pacific region link countries (Australia, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, PNG)

- We pray especially for Janet and for comfort in her time of grief. We pray for her family who will help support her, thinking of the friendships that form within our GFS family and for the strength we can draw from that.
- We give thanks for the many girls who have been helped through sponsorship and mentoring that flows from the program undertaken in GFS in New Zealand. We pray for continued building of relationships.
- We pray for Helen coming to the end of her term living away from New Zealand and give thanks for her recent opportunity to meet with the Pope. We pray for all Christians in this world, who meet in many different church faiths.

#### **Week beginning 9<sup>th</sup> February**

We pray for the African countries of South Africa, Liberia, Lesotho, Kenya, Tanzania, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

- We pray for the many new opportunities being sought to spread the news of GFS into new countries.
- We give thanks for Alberta's patience and that she will soon be able to travel back home to family and friends. We continue to uphold everyone who is fighting to control and bring dignity to the lives of people suffering from Ebola.

#### **Week beginning 16<sup>th</sup> February**

We pray for the Asian countries of Japan, Sri Lanka, South Korea and Philippines this week.

- We give thanks for the success of the celebrations for Sri Lanka as they recalled with pride 110 years of GFS service to their community.
- We give thanks that Glenys and David were able to finally travel to Sri Lanka and experience so much of their hospitality as they met with many during the celebrations.
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#### **Week beginning 23<sup>rd</sup> February**

This week our focus moves to the United Kingdom and their link country of Ghana. WE also remember our sisters in the USA.

- We give thanks for the life of Dianne, (Reverend Rowena's mother) and pray for her family. *Our deepest sympathy in the thunderstorm of emotions crowding her at this difficult time. We love her and will keep her in our prayers as she travels to and from Nassau.*
- We pray for Catriona Charlesworth who follows Glenys in her guiding of the GFS in Wales, and give thanks for Glenys's contribution. We pray for wisdom, patience, good humour and joyful service for Catriona in her term of office and those who work with her.

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**This is a large newsletter and perhaps it is something we have to think about again. I know that some countries can only distribute it by photocopying and a large newsletter is very expensive. But on the other side it is wonderful to receive news from so many countries. I (Val) have sent the first Administrative letter to all countries so that we can use the newsletter for news and prayer points rather than business matters. I have in most cases used only 2 photos from each country. I would be interested to hear comments from around the world.**



## What is happening around our GFS World?

**NEW ZEALAND:** Firstly we send our deepest sympathy and prayers to Janet Waite, President of GFS in New Zealand whose husband David died on 22 November. We have been praying for David and Janet for many months as David battled severe illness and Janet cared for him. I had advised each country leader and I know many have been in touch with Janet. Please continue to pray for her and her family.

Helen Allen who represented New Zealand in both Ireland and Wales has recently experienced a once in a

lifetime event. Helen was in Rome with her husband, Warren, where Warren finished his term as President of the International Federation of Accountants. 6000 were invited to a “private” audience with the Pope and 50 were chosen to meet the Pope and receive a set of Rosary beads blessed by him. Helen and Warren were amongst the chosen 50! A few days later Helen and Warren were sitting in Westminster Abbey beside the choir as they sang Evensong. She said it was the end of a most wonderful week!



Solomon Island, and the GFS Australia's on-going support for PNG in order to expand GFS. We also prayed for the survivors of the great East Japan Tsunami disaster in Fukushima and the members of GFS Japan to assist the women and children in the Tohokyu Region to get their lives back. Lastly, we prayed for the GFS Korea to continue helping North Korean defectors and their children, and gave thanks to God for enabling us to do it through running U-Mul-

**KOREA:** Greetings from South Korea to all GFS members worldwide! Since the World Council in Wales, we've been busy with various events. Among them World Day of Prayer was the most important event for us.

On 21<sup>st</sup> September 2014, our World Day of Prayer was held at Ss Mary & Nicholas' Seoul Anglican Cathedral in annual fundraising bazaar. We gathered together in its front yard for the service led by Rev Stephen Ryu, our chaplain. As always, we prayed for all GFS members all over the world and particularly for the PNG World Project, the



Ga project and the Café Grace.

After the service, the annual bazaar to raise funds followed. This year, about 40 members from 9 branches participated in the bazaar and it was a success. The part of the proceeds from the bazaar will be used to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of GFS Korea in 2015.

God bless  
GFS Korea

## WALES

Greetings from Wales! Summer has turned into Autumn and until recently we continued to enjoy settled weather with some glorious late summer and Autumn days.

Things are gradually returning to normal in Wales now after the hard work and excitement of World Council. It was great to see so many of you and to welcome you to sunny and hot Wales! After wondering at times if we would ever finally have everything in place for Council the time spent there flew by. For me, as a 'first timer' it was a wonderful and unforgettable experience and reminded me what GFS is all about!



As I write this Glenys and David are enjoying themselves in Sri Lanka. They are taking part in the celebrations for 110 years of GFS there. No doubt they will have a great time with Jeanne and her GFS members.

Members of GFS in Wales are looking forward to holding a retreat early next year at Coleg Trefeca which is a conference centre in Mid Wales. It is a very special place to us and we are hoping that some of the young people will join us. Although they keep in touch with each other on Facebook it is always good to meet face to face.



Shortly before World Council we appointed a Branch Work Development Worker for Wales. Rachel Matthews has been in post for several months now. Her role is to support existing branch work, help with recruitment and training of volunteers and to help raise the profile of GFS in Wales. Since World Council there has been some interest in new branches starting and we are praying that this will come to fruition.

Our branches continue with the girls attending being keen members. Recently Glenys took her branch on a pilgrimage to Ty'r Pererin, a young people's pilgrim centre in St Davids. They had a brilliant time, following in the footsteps of St. David and doing activities in the Cathedral. We are hoping to arrange a pilgrimage for GFS Wales in the future. (*see photos*)

Christmas is fast approaching and branches will no doubt be involved in retelling the familiar story of the birth of our Lord. Carol singing and Nativity plays all serve to remind us of the true meaning of this very special season. We in Wales wish you Nadolig Llawen! (Happy Christmas)



## SOUTH AFRICA

Greetings to all members and associates around the world. The sharing of the information will focus on the period from End August to Mid November 2014. Girls/Boys Friendly Society (GBFS) in the country has been in an exciting mode since the confirmation from the Wales GFS council, that South Africa will be hosting the 2020 world council as a united front in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.



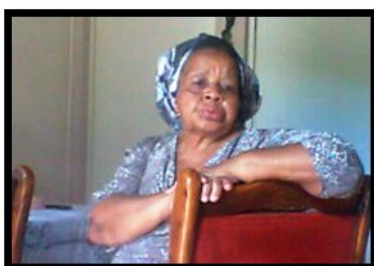
Drafting the newsletter at the same time listening to the news I thank God that the Minister in the Presidency informs the citizens that the remains of some of the 81 South Africans who in September 12 died in a collapsed building of the synagogue church in Nigeria will, before next week be transported home so that the relatives can get closure. I am

sharing this as part of bearing one another's burden.

The association in the country is striving to address the statement "called to serve through GFS" and also responding to the question of how the GBFS is doing, will grow the Kingdom of God.

Part of the response is motivating people to be united in Christ, that of working together with other youth organisations in the Anglican Church. The Mothers Union is working very well with GBFS in our country. They are the mothers of the young people that we are leading. They give support to the activities that the association is involved in below is one example

International day of prayer was successfully celebrated almost in all the Dioceses. The celebrations were in different styles with a touch of cultural dance but all dioceses used the service which was prepared by New Zealand. Part of responding to how the GBFS will grow the Kingdom of God, during this period the association has established new branches and commissioned about 300 new members, people who are to bear one another's burden. I know with God's help they will accomplish their mission.



The sad news, GBFS South Africa has lost one of the old leaders

who contributed in growing the young people and other leaders of the Dioceses of Kwa Zulu Natal. She was buried last Sunday the 9 November 2014. May her soul rest in Peace.

One the success stories, is the conference



which was hosted by one of the new branches on the weekend of the 25 October 2014. The theme was Walk with Wisdom. 8 Diocese were represented. It is where the young people were praising and worshipping also showing their cultural diversity. The local media was also invited and the conference was on local newspapers. GBFS was also formally launched.

The collection of the International day of prayer will be deposited to our world GFS account and will reach our world office before end of November 2014.

May Almighty continue to grow our Association, Guiding and blessing us all

## USA

*There are two articles from the USA! I saw some of the photos from Los Angeles Diocese on Facebook and loved the one I am printing – such happiness in GFS - so asked if they would send me a short article. Delores has sent a very interesting resource that could be used in branches. (from Val)*

The Diocese of Los Angeles celebrated the World Day of Prayer as part of a newly styled Fall event named GFS Day 2014. It was a day to celebrate who we are as a community and as a part of the larger worldwide GFS organization.



The hosting chapter, St. Mark's in Upland, made tissue paper pompoms as decorations and served as the hostesses for the event.

Girls aged 3 through 20 came from all over the diocese. They first colored a hand print on sandpaper, which will be ironed onto a tablecloth for GFS Japan. This gift will be sent to Japan in hopes that it will be used for worship or for hospitality and represents our desire to "bear one another's burdens."

The day began with the 2014 World Day of Prayer service from our sisters in New Zealand. It included Eucharist, a sermon involving a magic trick, and a collection for the GFS World Project. One of the guests of honor was a

Japanese ceremonial doll given to our diocese in 1956 by the diocese of Japan. She has held up very well over the past 50 years and is a treasured part of GFS.

Our theme for the GFS Day celebration was a Dance Off. This activity encouraged the girls to work together in their branches to create a dance that included all members, from kindergarten to high school. Canned goods were collected as an "Admission Fee" and were donated to the local food pantry. Six of the thirteen chapters participated in the Dance Off, with styles ranging from modern dance to hip hop. Awards were given in categories including Best Choreography, Best Overall, Best Soloist, and most likely to win "So You Think You Can Dance". Finally, the floor was turned over to the girls and leaders for free dance. It was a day full of fun and laughter and music.

## The Symbolism of the Chrismon Tree

Some of our branches in the USA display a Chrismon Tree in their Church. For two thousand years, Christians all over the world have celebrated Christ's birthday, each country according to its own traditional interpretation of the holy day. They were symbols used by early Christians as a symbol of faith. In days when it was dangerous to be a Christian, followers of Jesus used secret signs and symbols to communicate with other Christians. The Chrismon Tree is decorated with the symbols that tell the story of God's love.

The word, "Chrismon" is a combination of two words, "Christ" and "monogram." A Chrismon is just that -- a monogram of Christ. All the Chrismons are made in combinations of white and gold. White is the liturgical color for Christmas, referring to Christ's purity and perfection. Gold refers to His majesty and glory. "Christ, the Light of the World" is indicated by using tiny clear white lights.

**The Chrismon Tree** was first developed by Frances Kipps Spencer at Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia, USA. She set out to create decorations appropriate for a church Christmas tree. Centuries-old symbols depict the Life of Christ and tiny white lights reflect the purity of our Savior as they decorate the evergreen tree in the Church. Chrismons add their white and gold beauty to the Christmas season and make the celebration of our Lord's birth more meaningful by emphasizing God's great Gift to the world, our Savior Jesus Christ.

GFS USA would like to share the idea of the Chrismon Tree with our GFS Sister's around the world. Below are some symbols that are common Chrismons and what they represent to Christians today.



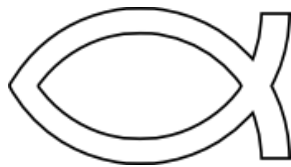
**The Cross** symbolizes that Christians believe Jesus Christ died for everyone on a Cross.



**The Latin Cross**, also sometimes called the Roman Cross. The base of the Cross has three steps that symbolize faith, hope, and love.



**The Anchor Cross** reminds Christians that Jesus is the anchor of their faith.



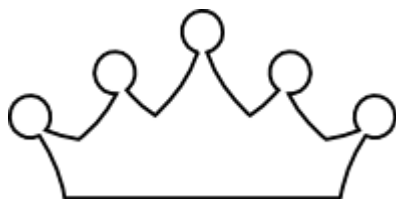
**The Fish** is one of the oldest Christian symbols. The letters, from the Greek word for fish (ichthus), stand for Jesus (I), Christ (X), God (Q), Son (Y), Savior (S). Some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen.



**The Star of David**, sometimes called the Star of Creation, is a symbol that Jesus was a Jew and a descendant of King David.



**A Five Pointed Star** represents the five wounds of Jesus on the cross.



**The Crown** is the symbol that Jesus is King. It shows that Christians believe Jesus is ruler over heaven and the earth.





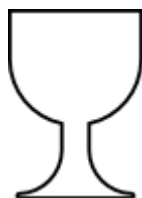
**The Shepherd's Crook or Staff** remembers that Jesus sometimes called himself a shepherd. It can also represent the shepherds who were the first people told about the birth of Jesus.



**Hands in Prayer** help Christians remember that they should pray to God.



**The Dove** is the symbol of peace and the Holy Spirit. It is shown pointing down to represent the Holy Spirit that appeared as a Dove when Jesus was baptized.



**The Cup or Chalice** is a symbol of the Mass, Eucharist or Communion. It also represents God's forgiveness.



**The Angel** reminds Christians of the angels who told the shepherds about the birth of Jesus. It can also represent the second coming of Jesus, which the bible says will start with an Angel blowing a trumpet.



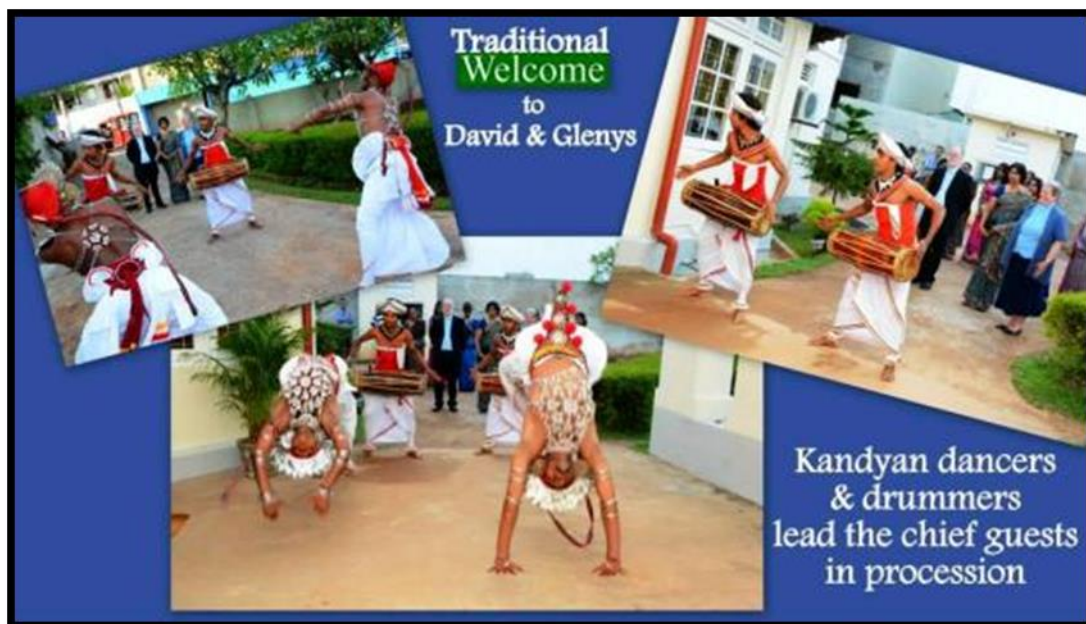
**The Heart** is a symbol of love and reminds Christians that God is love.

Please share with us your Chrismon Tree. GFS USA wishes each and everyone a Blessed Christmas for the wonderful gift of Jesus and the joy He brings to our lives. May you have all three for this Christmas. MERRY CHRISTMAS!

## **SRI LANKA**

What wonderful celebrations in Sri Lanka as they celebrated 110 years of GFS with their special guests, our Vice-President, Glenys and David Payne. I am sure we will hear much more from Glenys and David and from Jeanne. Here are some of the pictures on Facebook and we thank Roshan for keeping us up to date with photos. Congratulations to Jeanne and all Sri Lankan members for the great success of their celebrations. We pray that GFS will remain strong in Sri Lanka and grow in numbers and activities.

We also pray for Sri Lanka as a country as they support the many victims of the landslide in Meeriyabedde in Koslanda. It is classed as the worst National Disaster since the 2004 Tsunami.



*In **KENYA*** The Rt. Rev. Julius. Katoi. Kalu admitted 100 new members on 29 November. What wonderful growth.



**GHANA** had four new branches at their World Day of Prayer, GFS growing in Ghana also.

**ENGLAND** and Wales held a leadership training weekend together. Hazel mentioned in her email *"when we were not working we spent time talking about World Council in Wales and the how brilliant it was to meet so many friends from around the world – GFS certainly has something unique which we all share"*.

## AUSTRALIA

In September there were many GFS groups meeting together to share in our World Day of Prayer. This year I have been privileged to go to meet with the lovely ladies in Newcastle, a major city north of Sydney. Gail Orchard, who will be our next Australian Chairman is chairman of Newcastle GFS and was my delightful hostess for the few days I was in their diocese.

We met at St Thomas's Cardiff, on a very warm Newcastle day but the weather was not to be outdone by the warmth of the fellowship of the Newcastle folk. A slight delay had us all waiting expectantly for the start. With our new Archdeacon Sonia to lead us together with Canon Kathryn Bowyer, together we sang, prayed and focussed on the theme set for us by our GFS friends in New Zealand. I had an opportunity to

speak further about the theme, using one of my favourite children's author (Pamela Allen) and the story "One Sunday". We all share the joyous hope of knowing our risen Lord and God's



promises are real and true.

I may not quite go to tattoos to remind myself of this mystery of our faith, but its message is still true. Faith, hope and of course the greatest of all – love.

Following the service we enjoyed a very tasty lunch prepared and served by ladies of the parish before Gail, Sonia and I were able to share some of



the best parts from World Council.



## IRELAND *Greetings everyone from your GFS sisters in Ireland*

Once again the season of Advent and a step from Christmas! At this time most Clergy light a Candle on the Advent wreath each of the four Sundays before Christmas morning. We look at **Hope** on the first lighting, **Love, Joy** and **Peace** on the second, third and fourth, before the White Candle for **Purity** is lit on Christmas morning; a nice reflective 'count-down' before the



Christmas tree takes over. This simple process reminds us, before the celebrations begin, of why Jesus was born and lived on this earth – accepting him as Saviour **He** bears the burden of our sins.

Since the last Newsletter the 21<sup>st</sup> World Council is now in the past. It was a wonderful experience and it was a pleasure for me to represent my country as Senior Delegate. Everything went well, a lot was achieved and World business was

led in a relaxed manner. The worship sessions were most inspiring, entertainment was brilliant and accommodation was excellent. Congratulations to Rev'd Glenys and her team on a 'job well done'. The Irish Delegates and Observers have compiled a Special edition of the Irish Newsletter to visually report to members and supporters.

We wish Canon Val and her team every blessing as they take GFS World into the future - a huge commitment, but we are confident that the Society at this level is in good hands. It was lovely meeting the incoming personnel and great that so many of the team could be present, helping us put faces to names for future correspondence.

Since our return from Wales Dioceses have had training days and branches have re-opened. Central committees have met and the November Central Council has taken place. The Quality Standards process is completing its second year. Nomination Papers are in circulation in preparation for the 2015 triennial elections. In reality the Society here is just busy, busy.

It was a privilege for me to represent GFS Ireland at two Mothers Union functions; in June an overnight stay in Belfast



for its General Meeting and in November a daily meeting of its All-Ireland Council – further cementing our links.

Since the new Residents came to 'Oak House' in September there was a 'Fire Safety' night when a member of a Dublin Fire Safety Company spoke, with demonstration, on Fire prevention; making the girls aware of their own responsibilities while living in any building. The usual party was also held where these girls met with Rev'd Tanya, Central

Chaplain, Olive Thorpe, Head of House and myself as President.

During this season please remember in prayer GFS sisters who may be ill, lonely or in any difficulty. We sometimes forget through our own excitement that this can be a lonely time for others.

*On behalf of GFS in Ireland I wish all readers and their loved ones a blessed Christmas season with Good Wishes for the New Y*

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Greetings from GFS PNG to all our GFS friends Worldwide. GFS PNG was fortunate to have the GFS World President Canon Val Gribble ML in PNG her second home for

the World Day of Prayer. We had a wonderful time with her. May God continue to strengthen her as she serves through GFS.

Our World Day of prayer was hosted by GFS Resurrection branch in the urban deanery. Ten GFS branches attended the World Prayer Day service at the Resurrection Cathedral. The diocesan GFS Chaplain Fr. James Gombera was the celebrant at the Eucharist service assisted by the world chaplain Fr. Isaiah Masida.

The ceremony of the Light was conducted at dawn before the world Day Prayer service in front of the GFS Haus. At the end of the service GFS branches donated some money for the world Project. The day ended with a "BUNG KAI" (together eat) with friends, families, MU diocesan executive, clergy wives ministry executive, clergy and other invited guest. In the evening we had a night session on 2014 world council and World Chaplain shared his experience at the world council.



On the next day everyone left (often in long trips in overloaded vehicles) leaving Val, Mary and Fr Isaiah at the GFS Haus. With Best Wishes for a Joyous Christmas.

*Because of problems with the internet Mary texted me this message and I thank her for taking all that trouble with a number of texts. (Val)*

+++++

Father Isaiah now has an email address – [frmasida12@gmail.com](mailto:frmasida12@gmail.com). From January he will be moving to a new parish – Sorovi – which happens to be where Mary Bagu lives and will be in a village that has electricity so communication should be much easier. We thank Bishop Ihove, Bishop of Popondota for facilitating this move.

**CUTOFF DATE FOR  
MARCH NEWSLETTER IS  
  
15 FEBRUARY 2015**

We congratulate Delores who has been chosen as one of 20 delegates to represent the Episcopal Church, USA at the United National Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015. This is a huge honour for both Delores and for GFS. Please pray for Delores Alleyne, President of GFS in the USA, as she prepares for this important gathering.

**Donations, Gifts or payment of fees, etc., can be made by telegraphic transfer to:**

**Account Name: GFS World Account  
ANZ Bank,  
Shop 67  
Whitfords City  
Cnr Marmion & Whitford Aves  
Hillarys WA 6025  
BSB 016 494**

**Account Number 392526836  
Swift Number: ANBAU3M**

**Email Roslyn with the details:**

**<kevinroslyn58@optusnet.com.au>**

**PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF NAME FOR THE  
ACCOUNT AND NEW ACCOUNT NUMBER PLUS  
SWIFT ACCOUNT NUMBER**



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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

Please pray for Rowena Kemp, the USA GFS Chaplain who was with us in Wales. As I was preparing this newsletter news came of her beloved mother's sudden death. May the soul of Dianne rest in peace and may Rowena find strength in her faith.

