



# JOYFUL JOURNEY

Girls' Friendly Society, Colombo 3  
May - August 2024

## President's Reflections

My Dear Members,

It is with great joy that I reflect upon the remarkable accomplishments of the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) – Sri Lanka during the months of May to August 2024. Our outstation branches have successfully implemented numerous programmes, all of which are a testament to the grace and favour of God.

As the scripture in Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us, "For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future".

This verse serves as a constant reminder on the divine guidance and blessings that have propelled our Society forward.

The GFS continues to make significant strides, and we are eagerly looking forward to host the World Council in Sri Lanka in 2026. Our preparations to this momentous event are well underway and we are excited about the positive impact it will have on our Society.

Thank you for your continued dedication and support. Together we are building a brighter future for the Girls' Friendly Society and its members.

With warm regards,

*Rohini Rathnam*

## ONGOING PROJECTS

- The GFS branch meetings and prayer meetings are held in various branches throughout the island.
- Christianity classes are held at the Regional Office, Hambantota for 9 school going children as they do not have teachers for Christianity in their schools.
- Computer classes for 3 mothers, 3 young girls and 1 boy are held at the Regional Office, Hambantota.
- Kola Kandha project at the GFS Headquarters.
- Sunday School meal project at All Saints' Church, Maskeliya.
- Tea Project by the Regional Office, Dickoya.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### MAY TO AUGUST 2024

- Harishan's Success Story - Eye Camp.
- Environment Day Celebrations.
- Regional Coordinators' Visits.
- Inaugural Visit to All Saints' Church, Agarapatana.
- Christ Church Dickoya GFS Branch Sale.
- Ladies' Coffee Evening.



## Joyfully journeying with Jesus

During my journey with Jesus, I have worked in different places and now have spent almost three years with the Girls' Friendly Society. I believe that this was not my choice or plan but the choice and plan of God for my life. During this time, I have experienced many things. The amazing thing is that God does more for others through us than we can ever imagine!

Through the Girls' Friendly Society, numerous programmes and projects are carried out for women and children, and when we look back at how God uses us, the value of this is too great for us to comprehend.

The service that we do among women, youth and children is not a very easy task, but it is a service that brings great self-satisfaction.

Women work very hard in everyday life and as Christian women, they do a lot for their spiritual nourishment. In this regard, the Girls' Friendly Society can be considered a special opportunity for the ladies in the Anglican Church.

Our society has come thus far by the grace of God for many years and I consider it a privilege that God uses us to carry out various projects and programmes.

**Thushari Fernando** - Regional Coordinator – Galle Archdeaconry



## Joyfully navigating my journey with the GFS



I am a retired government Teacher and am delighted to be working with the Girls' Friendly Society after my retirement. I am also grateful to my Heavenly Father for giving me this opportunity.

This is a new field for me, and while I face challenges, I am committed to the well-being of the beneficiaries and am slowly navigating this journey. Despite my limited computer skills, I am thankful for the guidance of the GFS team.

In the past, I have had the privilege of working in six government schools with well-structured financial management. Similarly, the GFS management has also been transparent and well-organized. This experience has motivated me to continue working with them.

The GFS members and office bearers in the church work alongside us to promote the well-being of young girls, women and the community. We also conduct programmes to support women and girls. Due to financial constraints, women are forced to work. Even amidst their employment and household responsibilities, they still dedicate their time to the GFS activities, and I also want to take this opportunity to thank the three Anglican Priests in the Nuwara Eliya Archdeaconry with whom the GFS works, for their guidance.

**Jemima Moses** - Regional Coordinator – Nuwara Eliya Archdeaconry

## GFS CONTINUING PROJECTS



### ORANGE DAY

#### UN Sustainable Development Goal 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

2 Samuel 22:3



The GFS branch at **St. Andrew's Church, Batticaloa** conducted this programme on the 11th April 2024 by showing a Tamil video on child abuse. After an exciting morning, the programme concluded with tea, rolls, and vade served to participants. The programme ended at 12.00 noon after Rev. Janagan closed it in prayer.

The GFS branch at **All Saints' Church Agarapatana** held this programme on the 30th June 2024. In keeping with the UN Development Goal and the concept of Orange Day, some ladies and children were dressed in Orange. Ten ladies and one girl, including GFS Office Bearers, participated. Mrs. Ranjani Robinson, the branch president, delivered a message emphasizing the need for women to be alert, effectively respond to violence and abuse, and be proactive in such situations.

The GFS branch at **All Saints' Church Agarapatana** held this programme once again on the 25th August 2024. The GFS branch invited Sgt. Enoka Hettiarachchi, WPC from the Agarapatana Police Station to deliver the keynote address to the ladies and girls. She was assisted by PC Thiyagaraja who translated for her and accompanied by PC Nadeeka. This team was welcomed by the children by giving them flowers. Sgt. Enoka Hettiarachchi spoke covering the following important areas:

- a) Child rights and b) Limit children's access to social media.

Thereafter the session continued for the ladies on the following topics;

- a) How to show love to a child, b) Mothers' and family members' unity and cooperation,
- c) Avoid unwanted visitors to homes, d) Stop foreign employment for mothers who have children under 18 years and e) How to escape from abuse (steps were discussed).

In an effort to contribute to the successful achievement of the above UN Goal selected by the GFS, the branch at **St. Mary's Church, Bogawantalawa** continues to hold regular programmes. Some ladies and children were dressed in Orange, and posters and drawings on child abuse created at home were displayed in front of the church premises. Mrs. Devika Daniel a GFS member, provided a practical explanation of **good touch and bad touch**.

Notably, the members decided to conduct Orange Day programmes once in two months.

## CLIMATE ACTION

### Curbing of Climate Change by Caring for Creation

#### UN Sustainable Development Goal 13

Psalms 104:10-15



### Celebrating World Environment Day by Children attending the Christian Studies Support Class at the Regional Office, Hambantota

On the evening of 7th June 2024, a series of lessons were held for the children attending the Christian Studies Educational Support classes at the Hambantota Regional Office, to commemorate World Environment Day. The main aim was to convey to the children the importance of caring for the environment that God has given us and preserving its beauty.



A picture was drawn by each child. Every child who attended the class was given a vegetable plant and the children were taught how to plant and care for their plants at home.

### Celebrating World Env. Day with Sunday School Children - Christ Church, Dickoya

On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024, the GFS branch at Christ Church, Dickoya organized a tree-planting initiative to care for God's creation. It is indeed praiseworthy to note that 62 children attending Sunday school, and 5 teachers participated in this programme.

Children planted plants which they brought from their homes. This activity was done class-wise. Roses and Anthuriums were among the flowers planted, while Mango, Papaya, and Orange trees were the fruits planted.

It is inspiring to witness this branch's commitment to achieving the GFS Worldwide goals and the local Annual Operating Plan (AOP). Special thanks to Rev. S K Daniel for his enthusiastic support and guidance in the work of the GFS.



### FOLLOW-UP VISIT TO THE UPCOUNTRY DEANERY/ NUWARA ELIYA ARCHDEACONRY

A follow-up visit was conducted on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May 2024, subsequent to the Eye Camp, Home Garden Project and our long-awaited initial visit to All Saints' Church, Agarapatana by Ms. Devini Tissaarachy, CEO, Ms. Mercy Arulanandam, Coordinator and Ms. Jemima Moses, Upcountry Regional Coordinator.

#### Follow-up on the Eye Camp

The CEO, Coordinator, and Regional Coordinator embarked on a three-wheeler journey to the remote and mountainous Upper Division of Dunkeld Estate, Dickoya. Continuing their arduous journey on a six-kilometer stretch of rugged roads, they reached the dilapidated line room where Perumal and Letchumi resided with their son, daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren. The living conditions of this couple and their family were truly heartbreaking.

They arranged to coordinate with the new eye surgeon in Hatton and transport the couple to their appointment by three-wheeler. Subsequent actions will be determined based on the doctor's recommendations. Before departing, the team prayed for the family with their consent.

## Home Gardening Project

The team visited Kavidha, the GFS Treasurer of the Watatwala branch, and her daughter Vinodhini. The primary purpose was to participate in a small group meeting and visit home gardens. Unfortunately, due to heavy rain, members were unable to attend the meeting and the home gardens could not be visited. Nonetheless, a productive discussion and a time of prayer was held.

On May 11<sup>th</sup> 2024, after returning from Agarapatana, they visited Krishnaveni from the GFS branch at Christ Church, Dickoya. This family has a home garden and received green chillie, beetroot, and brinjal plants from the Home Garden project. Krishnaveni and her husband have a young son and daughter.

## Meeting at Christ Church, Dickoya

A productive meeting was held at Christ Church, Dickoya, with Rev. S. K. Daniel and a few ladies. Discussions with the GFS President, Mrs. Grace Edwin, former Mothers' Union President, Mrs. Premila Sam and a few other ladies focused on potential fundraising collaborations between the GFS and Mothers' Union.

Rev. Daniel expressed the need for an awareness programme on drug addiction targeting young girls and boys. Additionally, a significant development was announced: dedicating the fifth Sunday of the month for GFS-led services. Presently, the Mothers' Union leads the Service on the fourth Sunday. This is a great step forward!

## Inaugural Visit to All Saints' Church, Agarapatana

The long-awaited inaugural visit to All Saints' Church, Agarapatana, was undertaken by the CEO, Coordinator, and Regional Coordinator of the Upcountry Deanery on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2024. They received a warm welcome from the ladies, by being presented with a bouquet of flowers.

A participatory presentation about the GFS was conducted, encouraging the ladies to continue their excellent work. The importance of Bible study, prayer, and engaging activities to enhance GFS meetings, while also offering support to the Parish Priest, were emphasized. Potential fundraising ideas were discussed. An outdoor game was enjoyed by all, followed by a pinning ceremony for the GFS members.

It is truly inspiring to witness the branch's proactive and dedicated approach to conducting meetings and activities independently. This branch serves as an exemplary model for other branches. We commended the ladies for their commitment and dedication. Rev. Sam Thushanthan and seven members were present.



## GALLE ARCHDEACONRY REGIONAL COORDINATOR'S VISITS

### Church of the Transfiguration, Bouna Vista

On 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024, Mrs. Thushari Fernando, Regional Coordinator of the Galle Archdeaconry, attended the 7:00 AM Sunday Service at the Church of the Transfiguration, Bouna Vista. Archdeacon Ven. Sunil Shantha Gunathilake graciously invited her to read the Gospel during the service. Following the service, a GFS meeting was held, attended by the Archdeacon and his wife, Pathmaseeli.



We express our sincere gratitude to Archdeacon Ven. Sunil Shantha for dedicating his valuable time to the GFS meeting. He emphasized the importance of maximizing the GFS's contributions and pledged his full support. This encouragement is a significant boost for the GFS in the Galle Archdeaconry. Several key activities and future plans were discussed and agreed upon during the meeting.

### All Saints' Church, Galle

Rev. Mahanama warmly encouraged the Regional Coordinator, Mrs. Thushari Fernando, to continue her work. Members expressed their gratitude for the past support received from the GFS and acknowledged the current challenges faced by them. It was said that they would like to continue to work with the GFS in the future as well. Ten GFS members attended the meeting.

## NUWARA ELIYA ARCHDEACONRY REGIONAL COORDINATOR'S VISIT

### St. Mary's Church, Bogawantalawa

On Sunday, the 4th August 2024, Mrs. Jemima Moses, the Upcountry Regional Coordinator visited St. Mary's Church, Bogawantalawa. Once the Sunday Service was over, the ladies and girls met for the GFS meeting. Rev. Edwin Raj addressed the members.



Mrs. Moses gave a brief update on the GFS, monthly prayer meetings, Orange day and other small activities which ladies can engage. How to maintain records (filing) and the way in which Programmes/Activities should be planned and submitted for the approval were also discussed.

There were 12 ladies and 3 junior members present. The ladies displayed their talents by singing and reciting memory verses which were recorded by the Coordinator. They were very happy. The final prayer was said by Mrs. Catherine Kirubakaran, the President of the GFS branch.

We are grateful and appreciate the support and guidance given by Rev. Edwin Raj.

### St Paul's Church, Pundaluoya

On Sunday, 25th August 2024, Jemima, the Upcountry Regional Coordinator visited St Paul's Church. She participated at the morning Service after which a GFS branch meeting was held.

There were 16 GFS members and 10 children. The opening prayer was said by Mrs. Jemima Moses, after a hymn. The Former President, Mrs. Jerin Edwin addressed the meeting.

The President said that they have to elect new Office Bearers. Many topics relevant to the work of the GFS were discussed. It is hoped that this branch will be an active one after this visit! We thank Rev. Daniel for his untiring efforts and support towards the work of the GFS.

## GFS HEADQUARTERS STAFF VISIT TO THE UVA DEANERY/ NUWARA ELIYA ARCHDEACONRY

### Visit to St. Mark's Church, Badulla

A long-awaited visit to St. Mark's Church, Badulla, materialized on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The Coordinator for the Uva Deanery, Ms. Mercy Arulanandam, coordinated the visit with Rev. Jency Manjuka and the Coordinator Ms. Nirmala Sundararaj.

A presentation on the GFS, emphasizing its focus on women's purity, was delivered by Ms. Devini Tissaaratchy, the CEO. This inspired the ladies and young girls to renew their commitment to Jesus.

The interactive session fostered lively participation among the attendees. A new committee was elected. A post-meeting discussion focused on future plans, pinning the GFS badges and the distribution of application forms and membership cards.

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A spoken English project was identified as a pressing need, aligning with the GFS World Goal 3 and UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education).

The meeting was particularly noteworthy for the diverse age range of attendees, including a significant number of young girls. The committee's representation of various age groups augers well for the future of the branch.

## ESSAY COMPETITION IN THE GALLE ARCHDEACONRY

Initiated by our Regional Coordinator, Mrs. Thushari Fernando, an essay competition is currently underway. Participating churches include Christ Church, Hambantota, All Saints' Church, Galle, Church of the Transfiguration, Bouna Vista, Christ Church, Baddegama, St. Luke's Church, Deniyaya, and Christ Church, Beverly.

The objectives are mainly to encourage and create an interest in younger children towards education and give all the children and not only the talented children, an opportunity to participate in a competition. The enthusiastic support of the Reverends from each parish has been instrumental in the success of this project. Look forward to reading about the completed essay competition in our next newsletter.

## GFS BRANCH SALE AT CHRIST CHURCH, DICKOYA

The GFS branch at Christ Church, Dickoya successfully hosted its first-ever sale on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2024 at the church premises. Approximately 75 people attended the event. Following the church service, four ladies organized three sales tables. Five GFS members, including Ms. Nisha Daniel (Rev. Daniel's wife), Ms. Sutharshani Jacob, Ms. Paul, Ms. Grace Edwin, Ms. Chithra, and Ms. Mahes Thayalan contributed items for sale, with additional support from the GFS Regional Office.



The sale generated a total of Rs. 4,400.00, which was deposited into the GFS Programme Account on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 by the branch Treasurer Ms. Veronica Ratnaraj, for their use whenever required.

A distinctive feature of this sale was the selfless dedication of the participating ladies, who invested their own funds to prepare a diverse range of food items and generously donated their earnings to the GFS branch.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL MEAL PROJECT AT ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, MASKELIYA



This project was started on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023, and stopped due to various reasons. We are very happy to report that this much needed project recommenced on the 14th July 2024.

Children come from Moray, Upcott, Velagala, Dunkeld, Mullugamam and Gartmore estates, all of which are located far away from the church. Children are given a basic but nutritious meal cooked by the ladies in the parish. Children in grades 10 and 11 follow the Government Syllabus.

This project is a combined one with the Parish contributing their manpower and money whenever required.

## THE LADIES' COFFEE EVENING, COLOMBO ARCHDEACONRY ON THE 20<sup>th</sup> JULY 2024

The Ladies' Coffee Evening, themed **"Fancy Ladies in Fancy Hats,"** held at the GFS Hall was a resounding success! The event achieved its primary objectives of fostering camaraderie among members and expanding the GFS membership.

The afternoon was marked by an abundance of laughter, fun, and fellowship as ladies and young girls arrived in stylish attire and creative headwear. The engaging keynote address by GFS member Dr. Priyanthi Molligoda on "Probiotics and Antibiotics" was both informative and captivating. Adding a touch of nostalgia, Ms. Jeanne Withanage, the current GFS World President, shared meaningful reminiscences of her youth days at the GFS.

A variety of games, including icebreakers, charades, and storytelling, kept attendees entertained. The event also featured a lively dance floor, where participants danced to their hearts content! Delicious refreshments prepared at the GFS Kitchen were served, contributing to the overall enjoyment of the afternoon.

The exceptional contributions of the junior GFS members, Eglah Kamalenthiran, Sandeepani Jayasinghe, Alisha Piyaratne and Shelonica Jeevananthan, were instrumental to the event's success.



Special recognition goes to Eglah's mother, Mrs. Kamalenthiran, for her dedication in creating the beautiful hats and sharing her expertise with the girls.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all who attended and contributed to the event's success. We look forward to hosting similar gatherings in the near future.

## SHRAMADANA BY THE GFS BRANCH AT ST. MARK'S CHURCH, BADULLA

On the 17th August 2024, 20 GFS members carried out their first activity carried after the re-establishment of this branch.

The Shramadana started at 10.00 am. The ladies cleaned the graveyard and church premises. They were served with breakfast. An announcement was made at the previous Sunday service that it would be good if those who are unable to come physically to contribute towards breakfast. Rs. 3,000.00 was collected. However, due to bad weather the work stopped at 2.00 p.m.

They felt the need to particularly clean the graveyard as there are foreigners who are buried and there is no one to maintain their graves. They were satisfied with the work they did. The day's activity brought the ladies and young girls together in fellowship and friendship.



## Good Health & Well-Being

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages  
UN Sustainable Development Goal 3 Point 3.5



Strengthen the prevention & treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol through awareness programmes

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAMME HELD AT CHRIST CHURCH, TANGALLE GFS WORKS TOWARDS THE WORLD GOAL 2!

We are happy to note that 15 adults and children participated in this programme which was held on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at the request of Rev. Amila Fernando. Rev. Anil Wickramasinghe and Rev. Amila Fernando participated in the programme from beginning to end.

Mr. Manjula Prasad from the Voice of New Life Centre in Galle conducted the programme very effectively.

Awareness was given in the following areas: Because of the value of young lives and the value that God has given to our lives, we should be free from our addictions and knowledge on how and what we should do to stay free of these were imparted. Manjula shared his personal testimony as well.

The session was conducted at 9.30 am. Children were given activities which they did very enthusiastically. After a short break, the session for adults was held. This session discussed the ways in which children resort to addictions, how to direct them to the right path and many other important relevant aspects.

Although the number of participants was less than expected, it did not affect the programme. Our sincere thanks go to Mr. Manjula Prasad and his team for a very productive programme. We are very happy to be able to deliver such high-quality programmes to the community.

We say a heartfelt thank you to ServeNow for sponsoring this programme.



**“Now I can read clearly and can do my studies well.  
I am very thankful to the GFS”**

## Harishan - a journey his guardians cannot afford

Harishan, a 16 year old from Castlereagh Estate, Dickoya resides with his maternal uncle and aunt. Once an excellent student, his academic performance began to decline in Grade 9 due to deteriorating eyesight. Despite sitting at the front of the classroom to improve visibility, his vision continued to worsen. He scored 136 marks at the scholarship exam, falling short of the 167 cutoff.

Harishan's ambition is to become an Engineer. Harishan was initially fitted with glasses at the Eye hospital in Colombo, providing temporary relief. However, his vision deteriorated again after just six months, rendering the glasses ineffective.

Subsequent medical attention required a return trip to the eye hospital in Colombo, a journey his guardians cannot afford. This financial constraint posed a significant obstacle to Harishan's continued education and well-being. His vision was assessed at the GFS eye camp held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024, in collaboration with ServeNow and Samarasinghe Opticians.

Subsequent to this examination, it was determined that he required specialized care. The GFS decided that he should consult Dr. Ms. Dissanayake at the Nadaraja Channeling Centre in Hatton.

The doctor recommended constant use of glasses, as the left eye had suffered significant damage due to prolonged neglect. While the right eye is also impaired, the condition is less severe. Dr. Ms. Dissanayake has prescribed new lenses and scheduled monthly follow-up appointments at the hospital clinic.

Upon receiving his new glasses, Harishan was overjoyed. His immediate reaction was to test his improved vision by reading, and to his delight, the letters were clear. His aunt was deeply touched.



Overwhelmed with gratitude, Harishan expressed his heartfelt thanks to the GFS, recognizing the transformative impact of their support on his educational journey.

Harishan's aunt expressed her profound gratitude to our Regional Coordinator Jemima, stating, **"We are very grateful to the GFS. I will look after him and make sure that he wears his spectacles all the time."**

We at the Girls' Friendly Society, extend our sincere thanks to the two individual donors, Samarasinghe Opticians, ServeNow, Rev. Daniel, and the GFS Branch at Christ Church, Dickoya for their invaluable assistance to the success of the eye camp. It is immensely gratifying to witness the positive impact on a young life. We give God all glory, honour and praise!



Jeanne Withanage  
World President

Rev. Niroshan de Mel  
GFS World Chaplain

Ven. Christopher Balraj  
GFS Sri Lanka Chaplain

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