



JOYFUL JOURNEY

**Girls' Friendly Society, Colombo 3.
September - December 2024**

Reflection from the GFS Chaplain

Greetings to you!

I am happy to share my thoughts with the readers of the GFS Christmas newsletter.

GFS SL is committed to supporting the development of the lives of many young girls so that they face challenges with confidence.

This is the time of the year the churches speak widely of the young lady, who responded positively to God's call. However, the path she had to tread was not easy. She had to give birth being a virgin and not having a suitable place with the basic facilities. We may note that she had the required support. Primarily, Joseph, the betrothed husband, took good care of her with courage. The unknown innkeeper helped her by providing space even though it was not suitable for staying.

Different circumstances push people to vulnerability in our society. Some of them would find ways of overcoming. Some of them may give up, being discouraged. Some others may overcome vulnerable situations when they are supported by others.

The story of Mary shows the courage she has had and how, with the help of others, she encountered the vulnerable situation.

May this remind us to harness the strength we have and make the right use of the support we receive from others.

Best wishes for a blessed Christmas!

Ven. Christopher Balraj
Chaplain - GFS



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ONGOING PROJECTS

- The GFS branch meetings and prayer meetings are held in various parts of the island.
- Christianity classes are conducted in the Regional Office, Hambantota for school children.
- The Computer Lab at the Regional Office Hambantota and the new Computer Lab at All Saints' Church, Agarapathana.
- The Sunday School Meal project at All Saints' Church, Maskeliya.
- Kola Kandha project at the GFS Headquarters.
- The GFS Kitchen at the GFS Headquarters.
- Tea Project by the Regional Office, Dickoya.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Essay Competition in the Southern Archdeaconry.
- Orange Day & Breast Cancer Awareness Programme.
- GFS Branch re-established at Church of the Ascension, Bandarawela.

**GFS GOAL 1****Spiritual Development and Spreading the Good News****GFS Staff**

Morning devotions and prayers are held with the staff at the Headquarters and Regional Office staff joining through WhatsApp calls. The President joins us every Friday from 1.30-2.00 pm to pray.

**The Regional Office in Dickoya**

The Regional Office in Dickoya conducts a prayer meeting fortnightly from 12.00 -1.00 pm. GFS Branch members from the Upcountry and well- wishers of the GFS gather to study the Book of Ruth and pray.

**Celebration of World Day of Prayer (WDP)**

The World Day of Prayer falls on the 29th September each year. Some GFS branches incorporated the WDP into the Sunday service whilst others held it separately, on the 29th September and during the month of October.

**Monthly Branch Prayer Meetings**

St. Paul's Church, Pundaluoya, All Saints' Church, Agarapathana, St. Mary's Church, Boganwanthalawa, Christ Church Beverly and Christ Church Dickoya, held their monthly prayer meetings during this quarter.



**GFS GOAL 2****3** GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING**UN Sustainable Development
Goal 3 - Good Health & Well-Being, Point 3.5**

The follow up on the eye camp is coming to a close with an amazing story from Perumal Thanaletchumy which will be shared in the next issue of the Joyful Journey.

CONTINUING PROJECTS**The Kola Kandha Project**

This project continues to serve working people in and around the GFS. They enjoy a glass of healthy and hygienically prepared Kola Kandha from the GFS Kitchen. We thank God for the success of this project and look forward to improving it further in the New Year.

**The Sunday School Meal Project at
All Saints' Church, Maskeliya**

The GFS is happy to sponsor this small but important project. There is an average attendance of 24 children who are provided with a nutritious meal each Sunday. It is heartening to note that the ladies take interest and cook the meals for the children.





GFS GOAL 3

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education & promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Christianity classes at Regional Office, Hambantota

Christianity Classes at the Regional Office, Hambantota continue to be held at the Regional Office, Hambantota. These classes are conducted by Ms. Thushari Fernando, the Regional Coordinator.



"Computers are incredibly fast, accurate, and stupid. Human beings are incredibly slow, inaccurate, and brilliant. Together they are powerful beyond imagination."

Albert Einstein, Physicist

The Computer Lab at the Regional Office, Hambantota

Computer classes continue to be held at the Regional Office. The students were tested on their practical skills. A class for ladies is scheduled to commence in January 2025.



The Computer Lab at All Saints' Church, Agarapathana

The GFS received a donation of six good desktop computers from John Keells Holdings through Ms. Chryshanthi Manuel, the GFS Asst. Treasurer. On the 13th October 2024, Rev. Sam Thushanthan and the President of the GFS branch advertised this course through Posters to their area. 15 students between the ages of 6-15 years registered for the inaugural course. The first class commenced on the 20th October 2024. A course syllabus was developed by young Master Steve Jeevaratnam, who is an A/L student at St. Thomas' College, Guruthalawa. He has volunteered to teach at his computer lab. This is much appreciated. Mrs. Noeline Thayananthan, the Vice President of the GFS branch is in charge of this project. Our sincere thanks go out to Rev. Sam Thushanthan for his unstinted support towards this project and the work of the GFS.



**Success Story!****ESSAY COMPETITION CONDUCTED BY THE REGIONAL OFFICE, HAMBANTOTA**

This competition was the brainchild of Ms. Thushari Fernando, the Regional Coordinator in Hambantota.

During her GFS branch visits, it was observed that the children's interest towards education was very poor. This is besides Galle and Baddegama. The objectives of this competition are as follows:

- a) Encourage and create an interest in younger children towards education.
- b) All the children in schools do not get opportunities to participate in competitions such as these. It is only the talented children who are given opportunities. We will provide all the children a common platform to participate in this competition.
- c) The education of these children is at different levels and varies from district to district.

This project also meets the objective of the World Goal by increasing the interest of the children, thereby stimulating them to be motivated to engage more effectively in their education for a bright future. The essay competition was completed. The certificates were signed by the Ven. Sunil Shantha Gunathilake, Archdeacon of Galle. The prize giving at Christ church, Hambantota was held while the other branches will conduct their respective prize givings within the month of December.

A total of 86 children participated in the essay competition. There were four age groups between grades 1-12. The winners were given Gold, Silver and Bronze certificates, and 56 children will receive certificates of participation.





GFS GOAL 4

5 GENDER
EQUALITYUN Sustainable Development Goal 5 -
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Ending the abuse of women and girls

The UN Orange Day is celebrated on the 25th day of each month, culminating on the 25th November annually. This year, at the headquarters, we decided to couple the Orange Day celebrations with an awareness programme on breast cancer as this was viewed as very important. Unfortunately, the heavy rain prevented many ladies from the community attending this programme. However, 29 ladies participated at this programme including the staff. An excellent programme on breast cancer was conducted by the Indira Cancer Trust.



GFS Headquarters



Orange Day and Breast Cancer Awareness



All Saints' Church, Agarapathana

The GFS branch at All Saints' Church, Agarapathana conducted a programme for Orange day with the Sri Lanka Police Agarapathana during this quarter.



GFS BRANCH VISITS AND ACTIVITIES

Grow GFS

Under the grow GFS concept, the GFS branch at Church of the Ascension in Bandarawela was re-activated with the support of Rev. Joel Jackson and his wife, Ms. Medo. On Sunday, 24th November, Devini Tissaaratchy, CEO & Mercy Arulanandam, Coordinator for the Uva Province visited the church and re-established the branch. The enthusiastic new committee is waiting to conduct a few activities!

We wish them God's blessings for their future activities.



St. Luke's Church, Deniyaya

This was the first visit made by Ms. Thushari Fernando after Rev. Joseph Johnson took charge of the two parishes in Deniyaya. She visited them on the 6th October and spent some quality time with the members of the GFS branch.

Some of the committee members had left the area for employment. New committee members were elected. Rev. Johnson gained further knowledge on the services provided by the ministry of the GFS at this meeting. He promised to ensure that the GFS in Deniyaya continues proactively. This is very encouraging and happy to note!



Christ Church, Beverly

A cordial discussion was held with the GFS members by Thushari with Bro. Justin in attendance too. The ladies said that Beverly is a very remote area and many outsiders do not visit them. The main reasons are the lack of transport and distance. They expressed their gratitude saying "we are very thankful that the GFS visited us despite this situation." It is also important to note that all the GFS committee members were present at this meeting.



St. Mark's Church, Badulla

Devini Tissaaratchy, CEO & Mercy Arulanandam, Coordinator for the Uva Province had the opportunity to visit this branch and conduct a meeting with the girls and ladies on 23rd November. A new President had to be elected as the elected president had found employment out of Badulla and could no longer take on this responsibility. The message given was on "Friends in Action" connecting it to the work of the GFS.





Meeting with the Mothers' Union at Christ Church, Dickoya

An invitation was extended by Rev Daniel to Ms. Jemima Moses, our Regional Coordinator to speak about the World Day of Prayer at the Mothers' Union which included a few GFS Members, by Rev. Daniel. This is very heartening to note as much work is done in Christ Church, Dickoya with both the GFS & Mothers' Union joining hands.



Children's and Elders' Day Programme at St. Mark's Church, Badulla

Though this is a small programme, endeavours were made to address what parents should do, not do and what children need. The message given about the elderly was not to burden elderly parents, and carry out responsibilities independently, loving and caring for them and giving them time to enjoy their retirement. A drama was done by the children on the topic "Give us our world". The message given through this drama was "Give us (children and elders) the freedom we need".

The message given by Rev. Manjuka was connected to the drama and reiterated the points. Small gifts and refreshments were given to the elders and children.

The GFS was very happy to partner this event conducted by the church to honour and respect the elderly and children.



Pre-Christmas Sale at the GFS Hall

This annual sale was held at the GFS Hall on Friday, 29th November. It was a very successful sale with over 38 vendors having their stalls.





Christmas Fun Fact!

A Symbol of Hope and Renewal: At its essence, the Christmas candle represents a beacon of hope, particularly poignant during the darkest days of winter. Its warm, flickering glow serves as a reminder that even in the bleakest of times, there is light to guide us forward. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, often referred to as the Light of the World, & the candle takes on added significance, symbolizing the renewal of faith and the promise of a brighter future.

A Tradition of Unity and Connection: Throughout history, candles have played a central role in bringing people together, fostering a sense of unity and connection. During the Christmas season, families and communities gather around the soft glow of candlelight, sharing stories, singing carols, and offering prayers of gratitude. In this shared moment of reflection, the candle becomes more than just a source of light—it becomes a symbol of the bonds that unite us as human beings.

Practicality Meets Symbolism: Beyond its symbolic significance, the Christmas candle also serves a practical purpose, providing illumination during long winter nights and adding to the festive ambiance of holiday celebrations. Whether nestled in a centerpiece on the dining table or arranged in a window to welcome visitors, the gentle flicker of the candle adds a touch of warmth and intimacy to any gathering.

Spreading Joy and Kindness: In a world often marked by division and discord, the Christmas candle reminds us of our shared humanity and the importance of spreading joy and kindness wherever we go. Whether through acts of charity, generosity, or simply offering a listening ear to those in need, each flickering flame serves as a beacon of hope and goodwill, illuminating the path toward a more compassionate and inclusive society.

Embracing the Light Within: As we embrace the holiday season and all its traditions, let us not forget the deeper meaning behind the Christmas candle. In its flickering flame, we find a symbol of hope, unity, and compassion—a reminder of the light that resides within each of us and the power we have to spread warmth and joy to those around us. So as you light your candles this Christmas, may their glow serve as a beacon of hope and a reminder of the true spirit of the season.

Extracted from Christmas Enthusiasts





Christmas Wishes

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus and look forward to the New Year, may your hearts be filled with hope, peace, and joy. Merry Christmas and a prosperous & happy New Year from all of us!!



Executive Council Members



GFS Staff Members



All Saints' Church,
Agarapathana



All Saints' Church,
Maskeliya



Christ Church,
Beverly



Christmas Wishes



Christ Church, Dickoya



Christ Church, Baddegama



Christ Church, Hambanthota



Christ Church, Matale



Church of Ascension, Bandarawela



Church of the Transfiguration,
Bouna Vista



Christmas Wishes



St. Andrew's Church, Batticaloa



St. Luke's Church, Deniyaya



St. Mark's Church, Badulla



St. Mary's Church, Navathakuda



St. Mary's Church, Bogawanthalawa



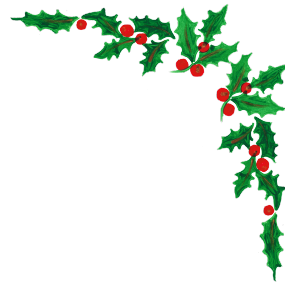
St. Paul's Church, Pundaluoya



St. Paul's Church, Mylambaweli



Headquarters Group



*“Who can add to Christmas?
The perfect motive is that God
so loved the world. The perfect
gift is that He gave His only
Son. The only requirement is to
believe in Him. The reward
of faith is that you shall have
everlasting life.”*

—CORRIE TEN BOOM



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FB – Girls’ Friendly Society, Sri Lanka

GFS Hall, Colombo 03

GFS Sri Lanka : Women helping Women

