JOYFUL JOURNEY

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Members of the Girls' Friendly Society,

Greetings to you all in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

As we look back over the recent months, our hearts are filled with overwhelming gratitude for God's abundant grace and steadfast faithfulness. The successful conclusion of the 25th GFS World Council in Sri Lanka was a monumental milestone for our national society and our global family. Under the leadership and dedicated guidance of our World President, Ms. Jeannie Withanage, the World Council brought together delegates, leaders, and sisters from across the world in a profound spirit of unity and purpose.

We give heartfelt thanks to God for bringing so many from near and far safely to our shores. In a world often marked by distance and division, their presence was a vibrant testament to the global strength of our fellowship. The vibrant discussions, shared worship, and cross-cultural learning reminded us that no matter where we serve, we are bound together by a single, sacred calling.

The conclusion of the World Council does not mark an endpoint, but rather the dawn of a new chapter in our journey. As we step into the future, we are called to be strengthened in the Lord and to forge ahead courageously with the ministry entrusted to us. There is much work ahead as we continue to empower young women, support our local branches, nurture Sunday School children, and stand firmly for dignity, safety, and skills development in every community we touch.

"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

1 Corinthians 15:58

Let us draw strength from His promises as we press forward. May we continue to make our homes and branches, places where faith is nurtured, prayer is cherished, and God's love is actively demonstrated through our service.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to every member, volunteer, and supporter whose prayers, dedication, and tireless labor made the World Council and our ongoing ministry possible. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Christ, walking hand in hand as we carry the light of GFS into every corner of our society.

May God bless you all, and may He continue to guide and prosper the work of the Girls' Friendly Society.

Yours in Christian Fellowship,

Rohini Ratnam
President, Girls' Friendly Society - Sri Lanka

SPECIAL REPORT: GLOBAL FELLOWSHIP

A Gathering of the GFS Family – The 25th World Council in Sri Lanka

July 2026 marked a historic milestone for the Girls' Friendly Society as Sri Lanka welcomed the **25th GFS World Council**, uniting nearly 100 delegates from 24 countries. Held in South Asia for the first time in the history of the World Council, this landmark event stood as a proud moment for GFS Sri Lanka and the global movement.

Adding to the occasion's significance, Ms. Jeanne Withanage served as the first Sri Lankan World President. Her visionary leadership and dedicated service provided an inspiring backdrop for the proceedings.

The Council offered a comprehensive platform for business sessions, strategic discussions, and international knowledge-sharing. Delegates reflected on contemporary challenges facing women and girls, evaluating ongoing global initiatives and identifying new pathways for ministry.

The World Council also included an opening and closing services, bringing delegates together in worship, prayer, and thanksgiving at the beginning and conclusion of the gathering.









A Living Legacy – Planting Trees for the Future

In a poignant ceremonial moment at the GFS Headquarters premises, outgoing World President Ms. Jeanne Withanage, incoming World President Ms. Lois Frankforter, and the GFS Sri Lanka President Ms. Rohini Ratnam participated in a symbolic tree-planting ceremony.

The act represented continuity, environmental stewardship, and the generational transition of leadership, leaving a living memory of this global summit on Sri Lankan soil.





Orange Day: A United Voice for Women and Girls

Advocacy against gender-based violence formed a central theme of the Council. Marking **Orange Day,** delegates stood in global solidarity to promote safe, respectful environments for women and children.

Sri Lankan branches from the Diocese of Colombo (including the Nuwara Eliya and Galle Archdeaconries) and the Matale GFS branch (Diocese of Kurunegala) delivered powerful presentations and role - plays that articulated a strong, unified voice against violence.





Celebrating Diversity and Youth Engagement

The Council celebrated the rich tapestry of the international GFS family through an International Fair, where delegates exhibited traditional crafts and regional products.



A dedicated Youth Summit provided young women with a direct forum to shape the future direction of the movement, while cultural performances and heritage tours deepened cross-cultural friendships









As the summit concluded, Ms. Jeanne Withanage officially handed over leadership to Ms. Lois Frankforter of GFS USA, who was commissioned as the new GFS World President, launching a promising new chapter for the worldwide Society.







IMPACT & OUTREACH: CARRIED HOME

Translating Vision into Local Action Across Our Parishes

Following the World Council, delegates and members returned to their local communities with renewed purpose, bringing global insights directly into parish life:

- **St. Mary's Church, Bogawanthalawa:** Shared insights sparked enthusiasm for new parish initiatives, particularly structured youth development programmes designed to help young girls discover their talents and participate actively in church leadership.
- **All Saints' Church, Maskeliya:** Members evaluated international best practices, laying plans to introduce regular skill-building, leadership training, and personal growth workshops tailored for local youth.
- **Christ Church, Matale:** World Council reflections served as a catalyst to reactivate and revitalize the local branch. Cross-group collaboration has paved the way for new community-based activities and outreach to disadvantaged youth.
- **Christ Church, Dickoya:** Through dedicated prayer meetings and mothers' gatherings, stories of global GFS leadership helped clarify the movement's mission, dispelling misunderstandings and renewing confidence in local women's ministry.
- **Christ Church, Hambantota:** Interactive presentations featuring photos and media from the Council inspired local young members to step into leadership roles, optimize existing resources, and build stronger ties with the global GFS network.

SPECIAL FELLOWSHIP FOCUS

Pink Pearls: United in Faith, Strength, and Sisterhood

Pink Pearls (Junior GFS members) continued to serve as a vital fellowship within GFS, gathering women together in a spirit of spiritual unity, mutual encouragement, and dedicated service.

Designed as a supportive sanctuary, Pink Pearls celebrate the unique gifts and experiences of every woman.

Embodying the core values of GFS, the Pink Pearls sisterhood demonstrates that faith gives courage, unity brings strength, and authentic Christian friendship generates lasting hope.





GFS GOAL 1

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT & SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

UPCOUNTRY & UVA DEANERY, NUWARA ELIYA ARCHDEACONRY

From May through August 2026, members of the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) gathered at Christ Church, Dickoya, on a fortnightly basis, for a series of meaningful prayer meetings dedicated to faith, fellowship, and spiritual renewal. Through thoughtful Scripture reflections, uplifting testimonies, and shared intercession, the community found renewed encouragement to remain steadfast in faith and face life's challenges with courage and hope.

Rooted in Scripture

Reflections throughout the four-month period centered on key biblical passages, offering guidance, hope, and practical direction for daily life:

- **Isaiah 64 & Psalm 122:** Reminding members of God's sovereignty, the sanctity of worship, and the joy of coming together in fellowship.
- **Psalm 37 & Romans 12:** Highlighting the call to holy living, patient endurance, and transformed lives centered on God's will.
- **2 Timothy 1:7 & Philippians 4:8:** Encouraging members to replace fear, anxiety, and uncertainty with power, love, a sound mind, and thoughts focused on whatever is true, noble, and pure.

Faithful Intercession

Prayer remained the pulse of every gathering. The community came together in unified intercession for critical local and global needs, including:

- The growth and spiritual vitality of Upcountry churches and GFS branches.
- Guidance, strength, and protection for local families and children.
- Healing and relief for members experiencing illness, grief, or financial hardship.
- Lasting peace, stability, and unity across Sri Lanka and the wider world.
- God's guidance and blessing upon the preparation and hosting of the GFS World Council 2026 in Sri Lanka.





Looking Ahead

Through shared Scripture, earnest prayer, and warm fellowship, the GFS community in Dickoya continues to grow stronger in faith and purpose—encouraging one another to trust God deeply, serve others faithfully, and stand firm in every circumstance.

A Ministry of Compassion – Bringing Hope to the Sick in Badulla

The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) branch of St. Mark's Church, Badulla, continued its vital ministry of pastoral care with a recent visit to a local family in Hali-Ela.

The visit provided a meaningful opportunity to extend comfort, Christian encouragement, and the hope of Christ to a member of the GFS community during a period of physical weakness. Through warm fellowship, shared conversation, and earnest prayer, members conveyed the reassuring message of God's loving presence, ensuring she felt remembered and supported by her faith community.

The gathering concluded with prayers for physical healing, renewed strength, and God's abiding peace. Through this simple act of service, the Badulla GFS demonstrated the core of Christian fellowship—showing that faith and love are most powerfully expressed through gentle presence, active compassion, and prayerful support.

Honouring a Faithful Servant - A Fellowship Visit in Badulla

The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) of St. Mark's Church, Badulla, shared a memorable afternoon of fellowship on July 8, 2026, during a special visit to Rev. Glory Jeyaraj, the first woman ordained to the priesthood in the Diocese of Colombo, who is now enjoying her retirement.

Led by the Vicar, Rev. Jency Manjuka, alongside the Assistant Priest and GFS members, the visit was marked by warm conversation, sacred music, and prayer. A reflection on Psalm 23 offered a gentle reminder of God's constant guidance and enduring care through every stage of life and ministry.

The gathering served as a heartfelt tribute to Rev. Glory Jeyaraj for her pioneering leadership and years of dedicated service to the Church. The afternoon concluded with prayers of thanksgiving, asking God's continued blessing, health, and peace upon her in retirement.

Through this act of appreciation, the Badulla GFS highlighted the enduring strength of Christian community —affirming that the bonds forged through a lifetime of faithful service continue to inspire and bless the Church family.



When Faith Becomes a Source of Comfort – St. Mark's, Badulla

There are moments when prayer becomes more than a gathering it becomes a way of remembering, comforting and placing our lives once again in God's hands.

At St. Mark's Church, Badulla, GFS members came together at the home of Ms. Margret to remember her daughter on her Memorial Day. The gathering created a quiet and meaningful space where remembrance was surrounded by Christian fellowship and prayer.

Through the reflection on Matthew 6:19–23, hearts were turned towards the things that truly endure, reminding everyone that our hope rests not in earthly possessions, but in God. The words of Scripture brought comfort and encouragement to the family as they carried the memories of a loved one.

The gathering was a gentle expression of what Christian fellowship can offer in times of remembrance: a listening heart, a prayerful presence, and the assurance that God continues to walk with us through every season of life.

A Home Blessed in Faith – St. Mark's, Badulla

The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) branch of St. Mark's Church, Badulla, gathered in faith and warm fellowship for a special House Blessing Service hosted at the home of a local GFS member.

The uplifting service was filled with hymns of praise, thanksgiving, and communal prayer. Central to the service was a reflection on Psalm 121, offering all present a poignant reminder of God's unfailing protection, guidance, and continuous care over our daily lives.

As the home was formally blessed, heartfelt prayers were offered seeking God's abiding presence, peace, and grace upon the household and all who cross its threshold.

The gathering served as a joyful expression of Christian fellowship and a timely reminder that our homes can truly become sacred spaces where faith is nurtured, prayer is cherished, and God's presence is celebrated daily.



GALLE ARCHDEACONRY

Faith, Thanksgiving, and Service
GFS Beverly Branch Monthly Prayer Meeting

The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) Beverly Branch at Christ Church recently held its monthly prayer meeting, providing members with a meaningful time of thanksgiving, shared prayer, and warm fellowship.

A central focus of the gathering was a collective prayer of thanksgiving for the successful hosting of the GFS World Council 2026, expressing gratitude for the rich spiritual blessings, international connections, and future opportunities generated through the event. Looking ahead, members lifted in prayer upcoming branch and national initiatives, including the World Day of Prayer, the Bible Knowledge Competition, and the annual Talent Show.

In light of recent national challenges, the branch also offered targeted prayers for communities affected by adverse weather conditions across Sri Lanka, asking for God's protection, relief, and guidance for all those impacted.

The meeting concluded with a time of fellowship and preliminary planning for the next monthly gathering, reaffirming the Beverly Branch's ongoing commitment to growing together in faith, mutual support, and active service.





GFS HQ Provides Travel Assistance Support for Hambantota Sunday School

To ensure consistent attendance and nurture spiritual growth, travel assistance is now being extended to Sunday School children attending Christ Church, Hambantota.

Many of these children reside in remote outlying areas, making regular commute to the church a challenge. The financial and logistical support provided by the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) Headquarters has proved to be a vital help, offering immense encouragement to the young students and providing valuable relief to their families.

Through this ongoing initiative, GFS remains committed to removing transport barriers, ensuring that every child has equal access to regular fellowship, Sunday School activities, and Christian education regardless of distance.

GFS Branch Visits by the Regional Office Coordinator

Christ Church, Beverly
Where Distance Could Not Stop the GFS Spirit



Some journeys are more than simply traveling from one place to another. They are journeys that bring people together, open new possibilities, and remind us that no community is ever too far to be remembered.

Such was the spirit of the GFS visit to Christ Church, Beverly, following the World Council 2026. Situated in a remote area where transportation remains a constant challenge, the church community warmly opened their hearts and doors to welcome and connect with the wider GFS family.



The visit brought together women, young girls, and children, creating a vibrant, joyful space for sharing, learning, and fellowship. The women spoke with immense enthusiasm about their own prayer groups and local GFS gatherings, eager to learn more about the initiatives being carried out across other parts of the country. Their interest quickly sparked conversation around a key practical need in their community—a proposed sewing programme designed to equip women and young people with valuable vocational skills and foster opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.



The younger generation added another deeply inspiring dimension to the day. Roshni and Omashia, who had served as GFS representatives at the World Council 2026, spent dedicated time with the Sunday School children. Through engaging stories and interactive activities, they shared an essential, empowering message about body safety, respect, and personal boundaries. The young girls of the parish also gathered for a focused session of encouragement, helping to build their confidence and ignite their passion to join the ongoing GFS journey.



What made the visit truly memorable was not simply what was shared, but what was discovered—a resilient community filled with enthusiasm, young people overflowing with potential, and women ready to embrace new horizons.

The journey to Beverly may have crossed difficult roads, but it ultimately paved a beautiful path toward deeper fellowship and future ministry. Sometimes, reaching the most distant places brings us closest to the very heart of our mission.

GFS Branch Visits by the Regional Office Coordinator

St. Luke's Church, Deniyaya

Opening Doors to a Wider Fellowship: Reconnecting with Deniyaya

A recent fellowship visit to St. Luke's Church, Deniyaya, provided an inspiring opportunity to reconnect with local Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) members, exchange meaningful experiences, and explore new pathways for ministry and community service.

The warm reception created an inviting space to discuss the broader vision and mission of GFS. Members were introduced to ongoing initiatives and outreach programmes taking place across Sri Lanka, helping them appreciate how their local fellowship connects to a vibrant national movement.

A highlight of the gathering was a reflection on the GFS World Council 2026. Through photographs, members caught a vivid glimpse of the global GFS family and the active participation of young women from across the world. The session generated great enthusiasm, inspiring local members with fresh perspectives on the vast opportunities for leadership, international fellowship, and service available within the movement.

The visit also addressed practical local needs, specifically bringing renewed momentum to the parish's computer training center. Following an unavoidable interruption, formal arrangements were finalized to introduce a new instructor, paving the way for the reactivation of this essential educational programme for local youth.

More than an administrative update, the visit served as a vital touchpoint for mutual listening, encouragement, and community building. The dedication and enthusiasm displayed by the members at St. Luke's offer a strong, hopeful foundation for expanded activities and deepened fellowship in Deniyaya.









GFS GOAL 3

Quality Education
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

From Skills to Self-Reliance – Women's Footwear Training at Hambantota

The women's footwear training programme at Christ Church, Hambantota, continues to create transformative pathways toward financial independence, self-confidence, and community empowerment. What began as an introductory vocational skills course has evolved into a practical engine for sustainable livelihoods and local enterprise.

From Learning to Independent Production

Following their initial instruction, participants demonstrated remarkable initiative by purchasing raw materials and continuing their production independently. Their ability to craft high-quality footwear without direct supervision reflects both the technical mastery they have gained and their determination to build sustainable self-reliance.

Inspiring Entrepreneurship & Impact

The tangible impact of this initiative is already visible across the community:

- **Micro-Enterprise Success: Participant Ms. S. P. Renuka successfully launched her own small business, regularly selling handmade footwear at the local weekly market and supplying women's societies and community networks in her region.**
- **Flexible Home Livelihoods: Ms. A. P. Amanda Himalshi, a mother of two, is utilizing her new skills to generate a steady income from home while maintaining her family responsibilities.**
- **Household Cost Relief: Several participants are producing footwear for their own households, directly reducing living expenses while continuing to refine their craftsmanship.**

Global Exposure at World Council 2026

In a proud milestone for the project, selected footwear crafted by the Hambantota participants was featured at the GFS Headquarters and showcased during the International Fair at the GFS World Council 2026 in Colombo. This global platform offered international delegates an opportunity to admire and support the work of these emerging local artisans.

A Foundation for Hope and Independence

The Hambantota initiative stands as a clear demonstration of how targeted vocational learning can unlock human potential. By equipping women with practical tools, market access, and confidence, the programne nurtures economic security and hope for a brighter future.










Nurturing Faith and Learning
Christian Religious Education in Hambantota

The Christian Religious Education programme hosted at the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) Hambantota Regional Office continues to thrive, completing nearly two years of faithful service with strong and steady support from local parents.

Currently serving 10 children who attend regular sessions, the initiative fulfills a vital educational and spiritual need. Because Christian religious instruction is not available in their local schools, these weekly classes provide a crucial foundation for the children to explore Scripture, learn core values, and grow deeply in their Christian faith.

Demonstrating their dedication and progress, all 10 students participated in an annual assessment recently and achieved outstanding results. Their impressive performance reflects both their enthusiasm for learning and the meaningful impact of this essential community ministry.

Building Digital Literacy: Computer Class at the Hambantota Regional Office

The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) Hambantota Regional Office continues to expand opportunities for local youth through its weekly Computer Class, held every Thursday from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.





Three comprehensive sessions were conducted for the current cohort of five students. The curriculum introduces foundational digital skills through a balanced blend of classroom theory and hands-on practical exercises, ensuring the children develop both technical understanding and practical confidence.



Upon completion of the training module, students will undergo a formal evaluation assessing both theoretical knowledge and practical proficiency. Certificates will be awarded based on their performance to recognize their achievement and skill acquisition.

By fostering digital literacy, active participation, and structured progress tracking, the Hambantota Computer Class equips young learners with essential skills for an increasingly digital world.



Nurturing Young Hearts Through Care: Bogawanthalawa

From May through August 2026, the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) Headquarters maintained its dedicated support for the Sunday School Meal Programme at St. Mary's Church, Bogawanthalawa. Organized with the faithful assistance of local Sunday School teachers and volunteers, the initiative continues to nurture children while strengthening the bonds of community within the parish.

Over the four-month period, a total of 164 nutritious meals were served to young participants. This ongoing support has significantly boosted regular Sunday School attendance and fostered a warm, welcoming environment where children feel valued and cared for.

St. Mary's Church extends its deep gratitude to GFS Headquarters for its steadfast partnership, which ensures this vital ministry remains a lasting blessing to the parish's youth.

Nourishing Young Hearts at All Saints' Church, Maskeliya

The Sunday School Meal Programme at All Saints' Church, Maskeliya, remained a vital expression of care and Christian fellowship. Supported through the sustained generosity of the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) Headquarters, Sunday School teachers and volunteers worked in close harmony to serve nourishing meals following weekly classes.

Over the past three-month period, approximately 312 meals were served, providing essential nourishment while creating meaningful opportunities for friendship, community building, and joy among the youth. The programme has significantly boosted regular Sunday School engagement, deepening relationships between the children, educators, volunteers, and the broader parish family.

All Saints' Church gratefully acknowledges GFS Headquarters for its faithful partnership and ongoing support in sustaining this impactful ministry for the youth of Maskeliya.





UN SUSTAINABLE Development Goal 5 (GFS Continuing Goal)

Ending the abuse of women and children

Orange Day Programmes

Standing Together for Dignity and Safety – Orange Day at Badulla

Orange Day at St. Mark's Church, Badulla, provided a meaningful opportunity to raise awareness about violence against women and girls and the importance of creating safer communities.

Through biblical reflections and group discussions, participants explored different forms of violence that can occur in homes, workplaces, plantations and schools. The stories of women in Scripture offered powerful reminders of courage, dignity and strength in the face of challenges. Dr. Elisabeth, a special guest from the United States involved in Christian and humanitarian education, also shared her experiences and perspectives on violence against women.

The programme encouraged everyone to recognize injustice, speak up with courage and support those who are vulnerable, reminding us that building a safe and respectful society is a shared responsibility.





Empowering Young Lives – Orange Day at Bogawanthalawa

The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) marked Orange Day with a vital awareness programme on child protection and abuse prevention at St. Mary's College, Bogawanthalawa, bringing essential messages of safety, personal boundaries, and courage to young students.

Originally planned for a smaller cohort, the initiative expanded into a school-wide assembly when administrators invited students from Grades 6 through 11 to participate, creating a powerful forum on youth safety and well-being.

The session featured practical, expert-led guidance:

- **Legal Awareness & Practical Safety:** Officers from the local Police Department shared actionable advice on recognizing various forms of abuse, responding to unsafe situations, and reaching out to trusted adults and law enforcement authorities.
- **Personal Boundaries:** Rev. A. Anandaraj conducted an engaging, age-appropriate workshop on "Good Touch and Bad Touch," helping students understand bodily autonomy and emphasizing the importance of speaking up immediately when boundaries are crossed.

Student engagement was exceptionally high, with several participants voluntarily stepping forward to share their takeaways and reflections.

In light of the event's strong reception, school management expressed interest in expanding future awareness sessions to Advanced Level students. Through this initiative, the GFS moved beyond basic awareness toward true empowerment—equipping young people with the knowledge, confidence, and courage needed to protect themselves and support their peers.





GFS WORLDWIDE

Main Theme of 2026-2029

With God, All Things Are Possible — Matthew 19:26

Subheading

Together in Faith, Courage, and Purpose