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Bethlehem Of Judea

***A little child,
A shining star.
A stable rude,
The door ajar.***

***Yet in that place,
So crude, folorn,
The Hope of all
The world was born.***



Bare Bones

GFS Australia Inc.

People belonging to a Christ-centred community,
locally, nationally and globally through the
Anglican Church

Issue 15, 2017

Gail's Reflection ...

Dear GFS friends

As I write this I am conscious that this will be the last reflection that I write to you as Australian Chairman – the time has really flown.

As we come towards the end of the year it is important to look back on what we have achieved and to plan towards the celebrations that always occur in December both socially, and those that we participate in at the end of our Christian year. I am also conscious that in the working world we are building up towards the parties that always occur, as my diary seems to be filling up with 2 or 3 events on the same day or in the same week. It is also the time of the year when people retire, and we celebrate their working life - all this tends to make our diaries rather hectic and it is not uncommon to hear someone say – I wish life would slow down.

As we prepare for Christmas let us do this in a way that will help us to truly celebrate the joy of the Christmas season and the time when we are able to get together with family and friends to enjoy the end of the year and everything that we have planned for.

*May you all have a truly joyful, holy and Blessed Christmas as we celebrate the fact that Jesus came to earth to share our lives, as well as, lead us towards the Father's kingdom.
Season's Greetings to you and your family from myself and Nicole.*

Wishing you a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.



CHRISTMAS IS THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS, THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

Reflection from our Chaplain

Preparation!

Our life is full of preparations!

In Newcastle we are preparing to welcome our GFS Australia family to Australian Council. And the Executive is preparing as well. Cheryl is preparing for what her term as Australian President will look like.

More immediately, Nicole is preparing this newsletter and waiting on this reflection!

Preparation is part of our lives.

In the church's year preparation is also very much on our mind, given that we are in the season of Advent. "Prepare!" says Isaiah. "Prepare" says John the Baptist.

The heart of the season of Advent is that we are preparing ourselves to receive Jesus as he comes to us ... both at Christmas and every day.

Firstly, in Advent we prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day.

Christmas is an important celebration, because at Christmas we remember Jesus, God's Son who comes to be one with us. And he comes in a very special way – as human baby, born of Mary in a stable, and visited by unusual visitors – shepherds and wise men – who talk about who this baby will become.

What is important about Jesus' birth at Christmas is that Jesus comes to us as a real flesh and blood gift. In this gift is the truth that Jesus knows what it is to be completely human. So, Jesus probably fell and grazed his knees and got hurt. He got hungry. He was sometimes happy and sometimes sad. Jesus, God incarnate, experiences life as we live it every day. What a gift! As we prepare to receive Jesus at Christmas, we do so knowing that God has come to us and entered our real human lives in him. This is why we celebrate!

The other preparation in our churches at this time of year is that we remind that we prepare to receive Jesus as he comes to us ... not just at Christmas, but every day. We read the bible, we say our prayers, we gather with other Christians, we worship God. All of these are ways that help us to understand and know that God is always with us ... even when we are not so sure about that.

You might wonder what I mean. Let me read you something by someone else that I think explains this really well. It's called a Letter from a Friend:

Dear friend,

I wanted to write to tell you how much I love you and care for you.

Yesterday, I saw you walking and laughing with your friends; I walked with you too, but you didn't notice me. I painted you a sunset to close your day and whispered a cool breeze to refresh you. I waited – you never called – but I just kept on loving you.

The next day I exploded a brilliant sunrise into the morning for you. But you woke up late & rushed off to school – again you didn't notice.

I love you. I say it to you in the quiet of the green paddocks and in the blue sky. The wind whispers my love through the treetops and spills it into the vibrant colours of the flowers. I shout it to you in the thunder, compose songs for the birds to sing for you, and warm you with the clothing of My sunshine.

Your friend, Jesus.

I pray that as you come to the end of our year, and give thanks for all that this year has been, and then rush onto whatever Christmas brings, that you are able to celebrate the truth of God with us. And that you also take the time to prepare yourselves to meet the Jesus who comes to us not only at Christmas ... but the God who comes to us every day.

With every blessing

Sonia

#Orangeday...

GFS organisations around the world will be marking the 25th of each month as 'Orange Day' to raise awareness and campaign against gender violence against women.

All are encouraged to wear orange (chosen as a bright and optimistic colour of hope and encouragement) on that day. This is especially encouraged on 25th November, which is the United Nation's 'International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women'.

At GFS World Council 2017, Delores M Alleyne Former GFS/USA wrote:

The 25th of each month is #Orangeday.



Wear orange. Take a picture. Share it on social media. Help end violence against girls and women.



“Girls Friendly Society Worldwide can create a coalition, making our voices heard and deliver change. We can become a megaphone for girls and women who are fighting for equality, making sure their voices are heard loud and clear. Together, we can shine a spotlight on critical issues. When all our voices join together, we become impossible to ignore. Empowering girls and women to understand their rights is a beginning in joining millions of women doing something about it.”

GFS Gippsland Commissions New Chaplain

Gippsland was delighted to welcome Jenny Ramage as our new GFS Chaplain. The commissioning service was held at Drouin where Jenny holds the position of Parish Children's and Family Minister. The Photo of Bishop Kay Goldsworthy The Reverend Jenny Ramage (Chaplain GFS) and Carol Johnstone Diocesan GFS Chairman at the commissioning of Jenny as Gippsland's GFS Chaplain a three year appointment.



Prior to the commissioning we were pleased to have held the first of a proposed series of Leader Development workshops.

A light luncheon was enjoyed after the service.

GFS North Queensland ...

As Messy Church is becoming very popular in recent times, we decided to organise Workshops across the Diocese to address this need. 3 Workshops were organised - Townsville 29th July, Mackay 13th August and Atherton 9th September. We were delighted to be able to welcome 90 participants across all of these. The workshops were run by Glen and Sue Taylor, the coordinators for Messy Church in Queensland and northern New South Wales. They were great - in all the information they shared, resources they provided and a willingness to continue support. Kidzlink NQ met all costs for transport and accommodation for Glen and Sue and those who attended only had to pay \$15 to cover morning tea and lunch. Parishes who were members of Kidzlink were also provided with a beginner's Messy Church Kit (at no charge) if they wanted one. They all did. We are busily looking at where to go in 2018.

Australian Council ...

Our Australian Council is now very fast approaching ... with planning well under way.

Our **Opening Worship** will be at **5pm** on the **7th January** with a Conference Dinner to follow.

Workshops options include:

Messy Church and Mainly Music ... Community Ministry ... Leader Development ... Prayer and Spirituality
Pastoral Care Today ... Craft

There are also activities, outings and bus trips planned.

Closing Worship will be on **Friday 12th January** at **Christ Church Cathedral Newcastle** which will be followed by our closing Conference Dinner.

The Australian Council concludes after breakfast and worship on Saturday morning.

Cost is \$900 for the full Council or \$500 for three nights or less.

Registrations can be completed online ... go to GFS Australia webpage, select News and Events and then Events from drop down box to access the registration form. The Travel Declaration Form and Medical Form can also be accessed by looking under Forms.

Please complete your registration as soon as you can, so we can complete our planning.

We look forward to seeing you in January 2018.

* Carol Johnston and her family as they mourn the passing to eternal life of her brother



* The people of Iran as they clean up and begin to rebuild their lives, for the families of those whose lives were lost, and all who support them

* Jenny Buckby (North Queensland) as she recovers

* Peace in the Holy Lands

* Leanne Kapetanovski (Melbourne) as she recovers from surgery

* Chery Selvage (Brisbane) and her Executive as they prepare to lead GFS Australia into the future

* For safety on our roads as people travel to join family and friends over the Christmas holiday season

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Our Theme Prayer

*Gracious God, we come to you as members of GFS
throughout Australia.*

*We give thanks for the many talents and abilities of your
people and rejoice in each other's gifts and uniqueness.*

*Take all that we bring, our gifts and talents, our longings
and our faith and use these to build up our work and
witness in everything we do.*

We ask this in your name.

Amen



National Executive
at Christ Church Cathedral Newcastle

From the Editor

I would like to thank each of you for your contributions,
your patience and for all that you do in your ministry
within GFS, the wider church and our communities.

May your Christmas be a Holy and Happy one,
filled with love, peace, joy, family and friends.

Love and Blessings ... Nicole