

GFS Australia

Newsletter - Issue 6

May, 2019

SEEK

justice



Micah 6:8

LOVE

mercy



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From the President

A series of coordinated bombings on Easter Sunday rocked Sri Lanka, killing at least 257 people (with the death toll revised down from 359 by authorities) and wounding 500 others. The attacks were the deadliest on the island nation since the end of its civil war 10 years ago, and targeted three churches as well as four hotels in the capital, Colombo.

Nearly all victims were Sri Lankan, many of them Christian worshippers attending Easter mass. Dozens of foreigners were also killed."

Taken from Aljazeera news report



Chilling words heard by so many of us only weeks ago. As many of you will know Val Gribble and I were due to leave for celebrations being prepared in Colombo, Sri Lanka with the first graduates from the World Project Education Program. What a tragedy for so many. So many lives lost, so many more damaged and fearful, confused and angry about the disruption of a peaceful existence.

Val and I have been in regular contact with our GFS sister Jeanne and at her advice we decided, after the event itself was cancelled, we would not be travelling to Sri Lanka at this time. Again, a matter for great sorrow and loss for all those who had put so much work into this great celebration.

I would like to thank all those from GFS who contacted us and assured us of their prayers and support during this time. Thank you also to all who have sent greetings and messages of support directly to Jeanne and GFS Sri Lanka. We know how much that support has meant in the aftermath of these terrible events.

So, this post Easter period has not been as I expected, but I have no doubt my disruption has been nothing in comparison to that felt by our Christian Sisters and Brothers in Sri Lanka. So, I ask all of you to continue to pray for all those affected and that the time may come again that we might be able to consider celebrating with our Graduates from the Project.

In other happenings of course we have all been hearing much from Thembecka and her team about the upcoming World Council. Hard to imagine we are getting close to just 12 months away. Time for us all to get our registrations in and saving our pennies to get there. On the home front we have been privileged to read the applications for Junior Delegate. In case you haven't heard, we congratulate Stephanie Stewart to this position. Please pray for all our young women who belong to our groups. (read more about Stephanie later in this edition.)

Please don't forget our commitment to "Orange Day". Here in Brisbane we have decided to go for Orange Laundry baskets filled with all the goodies needed to set up home for those leaving our Domestic Violence shelter, which we already support. Also please let us know if your group is doing something special so we can share that great idea.



I pray you have all been able to enjoy some of the blessings of Easter and are now transformed to a refreshed life in Christ. May your Walk with God be humbling each day.

Love and prayers, Cheryl

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From our Chaplain

Dear friends,

Since our last newsletter we have had two stark instances of violence in our world – on March 15, the shocking bombing of the Christchurch mosques, and Easter Day the devastating bombings in Sri Lanka. As we go about our day to day lives, seeking to live in love and peace with our neighbours, the news of these events can cause us to feel distress.

Following the Christchurch bombings, I attended an open afternoon at one of our local mosques. There the Imam led us in praying for those who had been killed in the shootings, whilst local dignitaries brought message of support and solidarity to the Muslim people of our community. The Muslim people, for their part, extended deep hospitality to all who attended, making sure that all who wished could participate in this time of prayer. I was struck by the comment of one of the young men of that community as I left. Standing at the door he was simply saying to people, “Thank you for coming”.

As I reflect again on that day on which Muslims, Christians, and those who would call themselves ‘other’ all gathered as one, I wonder if this is an example of God’s call through the prophet Micah, “To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God”.

A month later, came the Easter Day bombings in Sri Lanka. We have heard from our Sri Lankan GFS family of some of the impact of this horror, including how, for their own safety, their movements and social media communications have been so limited. Jeanne, the GFS Sri Lanka President has expressed appreciation for the prayers of so many. It will take more time yet for the people, churches, and businesses of Colombo to recover from these events. I urge you to continue to pray for them.

One of the upsetting things about these events, aside from the random violence of them, is to hear the perpetrators of this violence say that they act in the name of God. As the Christian and Muslim leaders of these two cities have responded many have said, “This is not God. This is not us.”

In our reflections on these events we find ourselves at one with the Hebrew people of Micah’s day, asking ourselves, “What does God require of us in these days?” The answer comes ringing across the centuries, “To do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.”

Brett Younger, in the *Feasting of the Word of the Lord* commentaries wrote on this subject (edited for length): *God wants us to do justice—to be a voice for oppressed persons, unprotected persons, widows, and foreigners, and to fight for the rights of handicapped persons, minorities, elderly persons, poor persons, and every person treated as less than God's child.*

God wants us to love kindness. We respond to God's love by sharing it with others.

We are to walk humbly with God: listening for God's voice wherever God may be heard; ... learning how other people make sense of their lives.



We will be more faithful Christians, not if we can refute every idea that is not Christian, but if we can affirm the truth and keep searching. Could it be that whether we have the right answers is less important to God than whether we show compassion? Is that what Micah says?

In a world of countless religions, what should we do? We should do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

May God bless you as you seek, in his grace, to live justly, kindly, and humbly.

+Sonia

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Introducing our new Junior Delegate

Congratulations to **Stephanie Stewart** who is our new Junior Delegate. Stephanie comes from Perth, where she joined GFS at the age of 5 and has been involved ever since. When she was a teenager she started helping out at camps, Holiday Clubs, Mother and Daughter High Teas and loves the Caravan trips to the country areas. Currently she is studying at TAFE, and working full time at Miss Maud's in Perth. Stephanie loves to care for the customers she meets.



Stephanie was part of World Council in Perth and is looking forward to meeting up with friends from this council and finding ways to extend their Next Gen group in Perth, inspiring them with news of GFS throughout the world.

Come along to the AGM in January, Brisbane and hopefully meet Stephanie as she is commissioned and encourage her in her new role.

AGM in Brisbane 11th/12th January, 2020

We invite you to join us again in Brisbane for the Annual General Meeting and weekend of fellowship. We trialled a new way of gathering this year as we met for the first time with an extended program around the



AGM. We are holding another of these gatherings, improved and exciting for everyone.

Brisbane GFS have offered to provide some billets for anyone seeking some homely accommodation. Registration forms will be available from August. Mark the date in your diary now and invite someone new to join us in Brisbane.

Bequest from Pat Byron

We give thanks for the generous donation from the Estate of our lovely Pat Byron who left a significant amount to be added to the Kathleen Bright Parker fund.

We give thanks for the life of Pat and her inspiration to many and now that this will also be remembered through those who are able to access and enjoy the opportunities provided in the KBP fund.

DATES TO REMEMBER 2019

Orange days

25th June (Diocese of Sydney)

25th July

25th August (Diocese of Brisbane)

Prayers and action for an end to violence against women

5th October—send World Council registration forms to Cheryl for signing before sending to South Africa

31st October—deposits and registrations to World Council

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We pray especially for those areas of our world where hardships have come

- **Sri Lanka** as they recover from the attacks on Christians, for those who lost their lives and for those who have had their lives disturbed and disrupted by these attacks. We pray for a freedom to worship without fear of attacks. We pray for our GFS members especially at this time. We give thanks for the girls who have completed their first English classes and are ready to graduate. We pray that there will be a right time to celebrate this event.
- We continue to pray for the **GFS in North Queensland** following the floods in February. As we know, it is long out of the news each night but takes so long for recovery to happen. Jennifer reports of the slow progress and the millions of dollars to be claimed in insurance.
- We pray for our new **Junior Delegate**—Stephanie Stewart as she prepares to represent the youth of GFS in Australia at the next World Council.
- We pray for our own members of GFS who are **suffering ill health**, especially during the winter months.



On the 9th February, GFS Melbourne celebrated with Reverend Karen Winsemius on her ordination as a Deacon.

We send our loving prayers as she sets off on this new journey in life, as she is following God's call for her.

Karen writes ...I'm currently the curate at St Stephen's Warrandyte and St Paul's Ringwood (both small churches in the eastern suburbs). Mine is a little bit of an unusual curacy, in that I'm the only staff at St Stephen's (although I have an honorary supervisor). At St Paul's my role is to oversee Outreach. I am encouraged to be able to work with such a variety of people and enable them to use their gifts to serve God in our church and community.

Prayers

- We pray for **Thembeke** and the new places of GFS as she travels and inspires people of Africa in new GFS groups. Protect her as she travels. We pray for the team as they prepare for World Council next year, for their deliberations and for plans being made.
- We celebrate with joy the new GBFS group in **Democratic Republic of Congo**. They recently commissioned their new National President, a Diocesan President, 25 leaders and 400 members! (pictured below with Thembeke)



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Rockhampton news



Narelle, pictured here doing what she does best, shining with a group of children.

Rockhampton GFS has been saddened by the resignation of our Chaplain of many years, The Revd Narelle Kidson. Many in the national family would remember Narelle's dedication to GFS Australia over many years. Firstly as a GFS Member and Leader for 60 years, and as the National Leader Training Officer – and many of us will remember Narelle's enthusiastic and skilful approach to training and the fun we experienced as we caught that enthusiasm and increased our skills. I will always remember the wonderful Easter training weekend we had in Melbourne – I think 1981 – which had an enormous impact on my GFS life

Narelle moved to Rockhampton Diocese many years ago, mainly for her health. She quickly became an integral part of our diocese and after her ordination fulfilled the role of chaplain to GFS for many years. As well, Narelle led the Townsend group, which in our diocese is a Bible Study and Prayer group. Narelle will continue in this role.

We thank Narelle for her service to GFS over so many years, for her willingness to share her skills, her wisdom and her deep faith to so many and to us in Rockhampton diocese.

Val Gribble



North Queensland news

News from North Queensland (Kidzlink NQ)

We have welcomed a new Bishop—the Right Reverend Dr Keith Joseph, and many members attended his consecration as Bishop. It was a great celebration. We are in the process of beginning to plan for a stained glass window to be placed in our Cathedral celebrating our GFS ministry over the many years. This will probably be a 12—18 month project, but we are really looking forward to this being installed.

GFS in the Torres Strait has once again begun and they are very keen to be working in this ministry. We are delighted too!

Plans are underway to celebrate Orange Day in September, and we are keen to involve all Ministry units who are members of our GFS.

Our greetings to all across Australia and our thanks for the prayer support during the massive flood event in February. *Jennifer* (North Queensland)



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Sydney news—Life Member



Deidree, Lyn and Tania on the presentation of Lyn's Life Membership at the March Annual Meeting of GFS Sydney. Well done to a long serving and faith filled member.

Lyn Vaak was recently presented with Life Membership of Sydney GFS.

Lyn has been a member of GFS for 59 years. Her long history of service includes starting the Emu Plains Branch and running it as Leader-in-Charge during its 32 years of operation. Lyn was one of the founding girls when the branch at St John's Mt. Druitt commenced in 1960. It was here that Lyn gave her life to Christ and He used her to reach out, guide and lead others to know Him. Lyn became a cadet leader and then after training, she was commissioned as a leader in 1966. When she married Uwe Vaak, they moved to Emu Plains. On Lyn's first day at St Paul's Anglican Church Emu Plains, she was met by Helen Marsh, who knew Lyn and her work with GFS. Helen took Lyn straight away to her minister Rev Jim South, with the exciting news that she had found the leader to lead Emu Plain's new GFS branch. So in 1978 Emu Plains

branch was established and run continuously for 32 years under the leadership of Lyn. Many girls were introduced to the church and shown God's love through this branch and the role models of the leaders. Through the contact with the girl's families, many ladies not only joined GFS but were trained as leaders under Lyn's guidance and have moved onto key positions either in the parish or beyond.

Lyn has served GFS on a District level. At different times Lyn has held positions, such as Secretary, Treasurer, Coordinator, District Chairman and as an Elected Member for the Blue Mountains District from 1966 to 1999. One highlight of Lyn's association with G.F.S. was when she was presented with her G.F.S. Filigree Brooch for dedicated service in 1991. On a Sydney GFS Diocesan level, Lyn not only participated in events but was from time to time involved in the organisation of activities. This included being co-opted onto many GFS committees such as camp committees. From 2000-2009 she was elected on to the Board of Management. Lyn was a regular volunteer, helping in the GFS Office up until 2010. Lyn also worked as a paid employee in the GFS Office in St Andrews House for 2 years (1992-1993) as Diocesan Secretary and again in 1997. From 2012 – 2018 she has been Diocesan Chairman, she took on the task, to keep G.F.S. alive rather than letting it close down.

Lyn has attended as a representative for Sydney GFS on many GFS Australia Councils. The first one she attended was in 1993 which was held in Rockhampton and then has attended every GFS Australia Council since, which is held every 3 years until 2018. On a GFS World level, Lyn has attended the GFS World Council in Cairns Queensland in 2002, Korea in 2008, Ireland in 2011, Wales in 2014 and Perth Western Australia in 2017.

Ev Beckenham in her book 'A Faithful Journey-The story of G.F.S. in the Sydney Diocese', says "During my time (as Diocesan Chairman) I learnt firsthand that Lyn was a faithful and dedicated young woman who lives the G.F.S. motto in her daily life." Our prayers and congratulations to Lyn on this well deserved presentation.

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Orange Day in Rockhampton—25th May



Orange Day at Rockhampton

The small band of members in Rockhampton held an Orange Afternoon Tea on 25th May. Those attending were encouraged to wear something orange and to bring a decorated orange! There were lovely gifts given for a Multi Draw and an afternoon tea full of orange cakes and decorations. The Director of Central Queensland Anglicare, Ms Suzie Christiansen, was the Guest speaker who highlighted the frightening domestic violence statistics both nationally and in our own area and some of the work Anglicare is doing to support survivors. The profit of \$688 was given to Anglicare to assist with their work in the DV area.

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Perth news



On Saturday 4th May, Perth held their 8th Mother & Daughter High Tea. Although we were down on numbers this year we had two new family groups join us for the afternoon. The theme for the High Tea was "Disney" and we enjoyed delicious sweet and savoury food, tea, coffee and champagne! Lots of raffle prizes were won and lots of fun was had by all.

Planning is now underway in Perth for our next "Blessed to be a Blessing Ball" which we will be holding in Spring this year – watch this space.

World Council 2020

Forms are now available for you to register, with the deposit due by October 31st.

You will need to send (post or email) your forms to Cheryl to complete the section about membership of GFS Australia (email to olytrans2@hotmail.com) before emailing to South African GFS .

Please note you will need to complete the forms and send to Cheryl by the beginning of October to allow time to sign and return and for you to make your payments all by the end of October.

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

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