



## GFS Australia March 2024

I would like to introduce my theme to you and encourage you to keep up your good works, which I read about in the annual report. It contains so many ways that dioceses are living out our call to be part of God's Kingdom.

My theme is "Faith in Action". It is based around James's call to us to be not only hearers of God's word but to put this into our actions each day. Often, we can feel like we only get to be "GFS" when we are

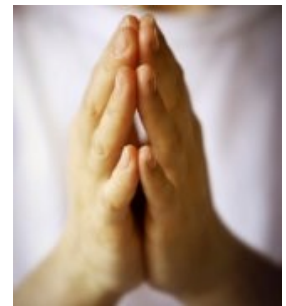
meeting with others either by Zoom or in person on a monthly or bimonthly basis. Then in between it is a lonely stretch. It is in that time that I encourage you to be thinking about the ways you live out our motto, the ways you put your faith into your actions – big and small, to be the people of God.

Can you make one day a week your **special GFS Day for prayer**? Or you might like to make it a daily practice. I have invited the first two dioceses to share some prayer points as they become the focus for a month. We begin with a **World focus and then Brisbane and Ballarat** are our first two dioceses for whom we will be praying. I will invite other as the year progresses so we can pray for them too.

I would most of all be encouraged by your responses, so please let me know how you go about these challenges – some photos or just a line to my email would be wonderful.

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In GFS love and service,  
Julie Somerville  
GFS Australia Inc President



### A message from our World President

Dear Members and Friends,

Here we are at the beginning of **March** ... and much of this month is spent on spiritual preparation before Easter.

In Ireland St. Patrick's Day is observed on **March 17**. St. Patrick is the primary saint of Ireland and he is said to have used the shamrock (symbol of Ireland) as a representation of the Holy Trinity.

In this month of **March**, may God **march** us all into unlimited greatness!

This is our prayer as we seek God's guidance to **march** forward as a united force, towards remarkable achievements and wonderful deeds, all to His glory.

Remember, His Truth is **marching** on ...!!

Yours in the ministry of GFS,



*Jeanne Withanage* World President

*May God **march** us all into unlimited greatness!*

## Challenges for February, March 2024

I am inviting you to join me in some challenges that I will set for you each month. The challenges invite you to keep on with your good works in GFS from week to week, outside of the time you meet with other GFS members at more formal meetings such as your Townsend meeting or branch meetings.



My theme invites us to consider not just our faith and how we build that up, but how we translate this into everyday life, in our actions, words and thoughts.

James speaks of this in his words in the New Testament, chapter 2, verse 14 “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? <sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

So, we have some good themes to follow from our World President covering areas of

- Spreading the good news,
- Good health and wellbeing (including substance abuse)
- Quality education
- Climate change and greening our planet.
- Curbing domestic violence and gender-based violence.

These make for some interesting areas to follow through with applying into our daily lives.

### Your first challenges:

You might like to follow a challenge for a whole month, perhaps a week, or just one day.

1. Wear your GFS badge to church on the first Sunday of each month – explain what GFS means to you if you are asked what it is about and perhaps spread some of the Good News.
2. *Try to limit your use of plastic wrap – eg Gladwrap, can you use plastic bags and reuse them? Could you try a container with a lid or perhaps you can cover food with a tea towel instead to keep off flies.*
3. Say thank you to someone who helps you, especially a stranger – perhaps say a thanks to the cleaners at the local shopping centre, the grocery store workers, garbage collectors.
4. *Read a new book – perhaps you have a Lenten study you are undertaking – keep it up!. ABM have a book entitled “God’s Own Country” see [www.intothedesert.org](http://www.intothedesert.org) for more information as a suggestion if you don’t have something to read.*
5. We want to try to have an attitude of “Responsible consumption “Sell your possessions and give to the needy Luke 12:33-3”. Find someone to share your ideas about this. What can you live without, what do you need to keep? Have you made a collection of items for the local op shop perhaps?



## Challenges for April and May

1. Listen to the hymn “Mine eyes have seen the glory “ (his truth is marching on) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDuVApacL7Q> and find out about its history (<https://wednesdaywomen.com/julia-ward-howe-her-song-is-marching-on/>) We can take pride in learning about a woman who wanted to seek out justice and remind us of God’s second coming and only He has the truth in her poem, later to be taken onto the battle fields in America.
2. *Refuse the plastic lids to a takeaway coffee—or better still bring your own cup (my friend even used one of her late mother’s treasured cup and saucer).*
3. Turn those “too beautiful to use” gifted tea towels into shopping bags to admire in their new use and avoid buying paper or plastic ones. Fold in half, sew up the sides and add a handle from a piece of ribbon.
4. *Catch the water from your shower, particularly as the water heats up, to re use in the garden, flushing the toilet, washing hands when outside...*
5. Keep a joy diary—what brought you joy each day over a week—did you sit and listen to the birds calling, found a new flowering plant, talked to a friend, got a smile from a stranger? What other fruits have you found this week?



God of justice and mercy,

Thank you for calling us out of our complacency.

Draw our faith into action for the sake of others, especially those we might not even realize we are ignoring.

Bless our gifts that we may use them to bless our community, and the world through good works that reflect your love and grace.

Amen

## Week one

### Pray for world Team—

For Jeanne , our World President, especially to gather strength to face the future as she grieves, for strong support around her and a clear vision for GFS.

For everyone to be passionate about GFS at this world level.

For the team—for those who work on the newsletter, the finances and for smooth transition from South Africa to Sri Lanka,

For the minutes from the previous World Council to arrive safely and for all the finishing off of processes that are necessary.



## Week three

### For our Link Countries

Rwanda

Lesotho

Angola

We pray for the leaders in each country—for Helena Kuby President in Angola, for Ruth Mukabaranga President in Rwanda (and also for Winnie Muvunyi who many met in Perth, 2017) and for Neo Mashapa who is President in Lesotho.

We pray for each of these countries, for their governments, for the GFS groups as they meet each week, for their growth and for new leaders to strengthen their teams. We give thanks for their work so far to establish and grow GFS.

**March**

**2024**

THINK

PRAY

ACT

## Week Two

### Pray for the World Project

We pray for the new World Project in the Democratic Republic of Congo to establish a bakery programme teaching cooking skills to girls whilst also teaching them some Christian life skills,

We pray for those leading this project, for wisdom and good financial choices,

For the girls and their vulnerability, that they will be supported to become strong girls knowing of their loving God,

For the success of their bakery as they cook and sell their foods,

We give thanks for all world projects in the past and give thanks for their successes and impact on communities.

## Week four

### For our near neighbours—New Zealand, PNG and Melanesia

We pray for Minnie in Melanesia, for their plans to reach into Vanuatu with their training programs, and for their work on the constitution as it nears completion,

We pray for Girika and all who lead in their dioceses in PNG, for safety and stability after the turmoil recently witnessed in Port Moresby, for ongoing witnessing to girls and women and strengthening of their ministry.

For New Zealand and their President, Christine Mutch and her team, for their bursary recipients and all who they mentor through their work.

## April Prayers—focus on Brisbane



### **Week one Social Justice Initiatives**

**Youth Homelessness Project** A new hostel is to be built and GFS is supporting this with an ongoing 5 year commitment of funds and is looking to provide a sizeable one off donation to really use our funds to support a significant project. In many ways this mirrors the work done by GFS in the beginning and over the years to provide a hostel, a safe place for women living in cities away from their home town possibly in rural areas.

**Anglicare Home Away from Homelessness Women's Hostel** is to be our 2024 Diocesan Project, to give them money to allow them to purchase necessities for the residents, as they have no funding, or available money, to buy essentials for the women e.g. medication. Please pray for good health and safety of the residents.

### **Week three - Members and Groups**

**Townsend groups** continue to meet—a Southside group enjoyed their Australia Day activities and Headquarters Group and on 30th May for the Outreach group as they meet.

We support and pray for the **children's group in Bundaberg** and their leader Kathleen, a KidsPlus group in **inner city parish of Clayfield** with Bronwyn as their leader, along with an older girls/ young adults group also in Clayfield and run by Bronwyn.

**Pray for members needing care**— Cheryl as she recovers, Lesley and Lesley, Nancy from Covid (and that all may stay safe from this virus) and Margaret's upcoming surgery. We pray all who are being cared for all in nursing homes and those who are carers.

### **Week two Support Projects**

**Domestic Violence worker, Jennifer, Chaplain to Hospitals - Alex** (both funded by GFS Brisbane for one day a week) and the many and varied projects going on in parishes—supported by a one off special grant (providing events such as Messy Church for Easter, a Christmas fair with a children's play area,) and ongoing children's ministry in parishes, supporting the Sunday Schools, kids clubs and other children's groups. These reach from Lightning Ridge to Toowoomba, inner city, outer fringe and coastal and hinterlands areas and all in between.

**Bursaries are given to two students in Theological Training, who want to focus on Children's Ministry. Pray for their studies and their passion for children's growth to be nurtured.**

### **Week four - For the new Executive team—**

meeting on **March 9th** for their Annual General Meeting with the new Archbishop of Brisbane to chair the meeting. Pray for those taking on leadership roles, to be diligent and fair in their work, to be guided by your Holy Spirit. For the meeting with our new Archbishop, we pray for good beginnings of a fruitful relationship.

We pray for Lesley B as she guides this group as Chairman and seeks to fulfill the motto in Brisbane diocese (pictured Lesley with Chris and Rev Cheryl—

latest life Members, who we uphold in prayer.) We pray for those recuperating, those awaiting test results and those in nursing homes.



## May Prayers—focus on Ballarat

### Week One—Executive and plans

Give thanks for the recent Annual meeting and the election of the Executive members (continuing on in their positions). We pray for those who faithfully serve in the various roles—Wendy, Nathalie, Helen and give thanks for the Chaplain Fr Chris as he shares his time with us.

March 18th next meeting of Executive as they consider the program for 2024 and donations to be made.

We give thanks for the opportunities to participate in the first Sundays which are “GFS Sundays” at St Johns where members take on many different roles.

Plans for Townsend meetings (on 5th Mondays) with April 29th as the next meeting,

Guest speakers to include—representative from Alzheimer's Association, Town and City Mission, realizing own potentials, musical afternoons.

## Week Two—Faithful Members



We give thanks for the long and fruitful lives of these members celebrating special birthdays this year—

Yvonne—103 on 9th March,

Mavis—94 and still knitting squares for blankets

Sheila—93 and still happily attending meetings with Townsend.

For those needing care and special attention in their nursing homes—Jan, Heather, Yvonne and Betty. We thank those kindly souls who find time to visit those unwell or in need of some time with a friend.

For those unwell—Lorraine, Noelene, Joy and Jenni-Ann we pray for comfort and healing, for those who care for their needs.

We pray for all our members as they meet regularly and joyfully.



### Week Three—Community workers

We give thanks for the opportunity to work for the community, in the Op Shop on Thursdays, where items go off to support the community through Anglicare, Uniting Care, WRISC and the soup and shower bus. We have sourced socks and men's t-shirts when called upon.

We are grateful that we can clean out our own cupboards to share with others, to make a new use of unwanted items.

We give joyfully to the food collections as an ongoing line of donations, to share our abundance with those who need a little extra.



### Week four—Nurturing

We thank God for those who are recipients of the Music scholarships and furthering the music in our churches.

As we help to spread awareness of the plight of those affected by domestic violence, we are grateful for the churches now displaying the GFS posters.

We are nurturers of the plants given out at the 2023 World Day of Prayer service for the Communion Forest project, help us to nurture this new life and help heal our planet.

