



October 8, 2016

As we embarked on a new GFS year in 2015-2016, We have many things to be proud of. We have welcome Honduras and Dominican Republic of Province IX of the Episcopal Church to our GFS family. Representatives of GFS/USA have attended ECW Province meetings to introduce GFS. GFS/USA is active and growing in numbers. We held our 62nd GFS/USA National Assembly at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Connecticut in July where we were honored to have the diocese of Connecticut Bishop Laura Ahrens, Bishop Jeffery Rowthorn and the Most Rev. Michael B. Curry at our closing service. What a glorious uplifting time for all of us. At our National Assembly, we passed many exciting initiatives to increasing the age of membership in GFS/USA to include young women to age 30. This group of 17 -30 will be call GFS Ambassadors. A new National President was elected Ms. Lois Frankforter will serve the organization for 3 years until the next National Assembly in Pennsylvania in 2018. GFS/USA representatives and observers will be traveling to attending the GFS World Council meeting in Perth, Australia in July of this coming year.

In our Province , I am very thankful for the dedication and consistent hard work of the phenomenal group of women in Connecticut and Western Massachusetts at St. Luke's-New Haven, Grace and St. Peter's-Hamden and St. Paul's-Wallingford and St. Peter's-Western Massachusetts who have taken on the leadership role of GFS branch advisors and leaders. They are the force behind GFS.

Each GFS meeting focuses on the four components that are the foundation of GFS, worship, service, study and recreation (fellowship). Many activities are planned during their program year which helps the girls to become, Christian women, women of leadership and women of courage.

During the GFS/USA month of service in October "Giving a Heart, lending a Hand" the girl's collected items for a gift basket for the fireman at the Firehouse, it was their way of saying thank you for their service to the community. Another service project was twofold, giving them the opportunity to give to others but also was educational by making pillow cases for the Teen Challenge Program. A local program for youth that are suffering from addiction and abuse which provides a comprehensive Christian faith-based solution to life-controlling problems.

During some of their meetings as part of the educational component, they learn the steps that it takes to make cookies but, they don't even let them cool before they are consumed for their snack.

One of the girls' favorite activity is the annual Diocesan Sleep-over Junk food buffet. Where they have the opportunity to fellowship with other girls from other branches from the diocese of Connecticut. In the future, the girls from Western Massachusetts will be joining us and stay up way past 12:00 a.m. At the end of the school year and the end of the GFS branch activities, many girls attend GFS camp weekend at Camp Incarnation, in Ivoryton, Connecticut.

Once again the girls and their leaders at St. Luke's in New Haven trimmed a Chrismon Tree that was placed in the sanctuary. The Chrismon tree is decorated with Christian symbols to help Christians to remember that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus's birthday. The girls made and place white and gold symbols, using the liturgical colors for Christmas that symbolizes that Jesus was pure and perfect. Gold symbolized His Majesty and Glory. The **Cross** was placed on the tree to represent Christians believe Jesus Christ died for everyone

on the cross. The **star** representing the nativity, the star of Bethlehem where the Wiseman visited Jesus. The **Dove** symbolizing peace and the Holy Spirit that appeared as a Dove when Jesus was baptized and many others symbols that represent our faith.

GFS is thriving with very active groups of girls but we can always welcome new members between the ages of 5-12 years of age. We are also seeking leaders to lead groups of girls that are 13-17 years old. This age group has many opportunities in our Diocese and at the GFS World level.

I firmly believe that GFS has the compassion to pray for one another. It is our mission "Bear Ye One Another's Burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" in this spirit we do God's work and make a difference in a girl's life, a difference in our community and world.

It is with the church encouragement, and support of the Episcopal Church Women that our GFS ministry continues for girls in our church but also, in the community.

Delores M. Alleyne

Submitted by: Delores M. Alleyne