



# Girls' Friendly Society, USA

The 2007 GFSUSA National Assembly was held this past June on the banks of the Hudson River at the beautiful Passionist Spiritual Center in Riverdale, New York. Our theme for the past three years "All things are possible for those who believe!" was evident in all aspects of our time together – the facility, business sessions, worship, fellowship and cultural events.

Upon arrival, our main meeting room was transformed by the diocesan displays and banners. Each table proudly shared the activities and accomplishments of the branches and their members. The displays reflected our diversity because one of the great things about GFS is that it allows branch leaders to tailor their programs to the needs, interests, and schedules of their members. Some branches meet once a week – some once a month. The themes of worship, outreach, study and recreation provide the frame work for the GFS program, but each branch explores these themes through a variety of activities. Some branches use a structured program like the GFS Symbol Program. It has a study and activity resource based on the symbols that illustrate our Christian tradition and Episcopal heritage, such as the fish, the manger and the dove. Other branches develop programs based on a theme from a bible verse or a particular service or mission project. But all branches strive to be places where young girls and women can grow and develop in a positive, supportive environment. In addition to local parish branch meetings, members participate in diocesan events such as Creative Arts Days, "Not So Quiet" Days, and Rally Days. For Pennsylvania and New Jersey junior members, a highlight of their summer is the week they spend at the GFS Holiday House in Cape May, New Jersey. Other dioceses head to the woods for camp weekends. The variety and diversity of all these activities on display in our meeting room was inspiring.

**Our National Assembly is held every third year.** It is our primary national business session, so our agenda was ambitious. At first it seemed that we would never be able to cover it all in the week we had together. But the "All Things Are Possible" spirit soon had us brain storming and developing proposals that reflected the groups' consensus. We voted to expand our GFSUSA family by amending our bylaws to include sponsors and sponsor groups – women who are interested in supporting and furthering the work of the GFS leaders in their branches. We also shared our ideas and experiences on the key strategic planning issues of developing branches, programs and leaders.

Our worship services during National Assembly also reflected our diversity as each diocese took the lead for a service. Connecticut began the week with a service where each person selected a rock with an inspirational word to carry with them - "Believe", "Friendship", "Inspire", "Love", "Harmony", "Spirit", or "Faith". At the service the last evening we formed a circle and shared the word from the rock we had chosen. One morning Pennsylvania shared a Taize (meditative singing) service where we were able to clear our minds and relax with a repetitive chant. We were also treated to a beautiful liturgical dance by a Pennsylvania member. New York as the host diocese had the biggest responsibility of all – the closing service where the new officers were installed.

Of course there was also ample opportunity to simply have fun! Whether it was a competitive game of Wink, mastering the New York mass transit system, or just sitting together in the evening sharing a laugh over the day's events. For many they were able to take a step back in time with a trip to Ellis Island. Others experienced Times Square and saw their first Broadway show. During the Assembly we were also treated to a tremendous performance by the members of the Church of the Resurrection of the Diocese of Long Island. The entire branch came to dance and sing for us. They were inspiring!

**GFSUSA is also a part of a larger international organization with members in 23 countries around the World and we are busy preparing for our World Council which will be held in Seoul Korea in August 2008.**

If you would like additional information about the Girls' Friendly Society visit our website at [www.gfsusa.org](http://www.gfsusa.org) or you can contact me at [loisfrankforter@comcast.net](mailto:loisfrankforter@comcast.net). Lois Frankforter, GFSUSA President

## Mission Statement:

The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) of the United States of America is part of an international, not for profit, faith-based organization for girls and women. We are a community serving through Christ and affiliated with the Episcopal Church.

We believe in the value of each human being and the richness of a diverse community. GFS welcomes all girls and women of any age, race, religion and nationality.

**Our purpose is to provide girls and women with a support system aimed at developing the whole person.** GFS parish based programs focus on worship, outreach, study and recreation. We help our members develop their talents and skills, empowering them with the faith, self esteem and confidence to cope in an ever changing complex world.