

**THE
GIRLS FRIENDLY SOCIETY**



IN IRELAND

Revised 2009

GFS CONSTITUTION

PRELIMINARY

1. **The name of the Society** is 'The Girls Friendly Society in Ireland'. Membership is open to all girls and women but the leaders and officials must be communicant members of the Church of Ireland, or of a church in communion therewith, or with the consent of the Bishop/Rector others may be appointed. The Society was founded in London in 1875 by Mrs Elizabeth Townsend and came to Ireland in 1877. The society in Ireland is affiliated to the World Council of the Girls Friendly Society since 1955.
2. **The purpose of the Society** is "To unite for the glory of God in one fellowship of prayer and service, girls and women throughout the world, to promote friendship and to uphold Christian standards in thought, word and deed.
3. **The motto of the Society** is "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6 v2)
4. Prayers should be said at all GFS meetings, including The Lord's Prayer and the prayer of the Society.

ORGANISATION

PATRONS: The Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin

The organisation of the Society shall comprise of:

1. Central President
2. Central Office
3. Hon. Treasurer
4. Central Council and the following Committees:
 - a. Finance Committee
 - b. Procedures Committee
 - c. House Committee
 - d. Executive Committee
 - e. Any other Committees as elected by Central Council.
5. The Trustees
6. Diocesan Councils
7. Branches

For details of each, please see relevant section in following pages.

MEMBERSHIP

The Society consists of the following sections:

- Junior Candidates 3-5 years
- Candidates 5-7 years
- Junior Members 7-11 years
- Members 11-15 years
- Senior Members 15-21 years
- Townsend Members over 21 years. (This section of the society, known as the Townsend Members Fellowship, is named after our founder, Mrs Mary Elizabeth Townsend).

The enrolment of a member into each section will be determined by their age on 1st July of preceding year of attendance.

Every member of the Society, after due preparation, and on being enrolled and having made the promise appropriate to the group of which she becomes a member, shall receive a membership card. As a member advances in age, she should be enrolled to the following succeeding group, making the relevant promise. Members should, if possible, be admitted during a GFS service in Church. Members do not require to be enrolled each year, however they may renew their promise on an annual basis.

Junior Candidates, Candidates and Junior Members' Promise:

'I promise with God's help, to learn to love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ and to help other people'

Members, Seniors and Townsend Members Promise

I ... (Christian name) promise with God's help to grow in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be regular in public and private prayer, and to promote friendship and purity of life.

ALL IRELAND CENTRAL COUNCIL

STRUCTURE

Central Council shall consist of the following members with power to vote:

1. The Central President and six elected Vice Presidents.
2. Life Members are those nominated by Central Council together with all past Senior and Junior Delegates who represented Ireland at World Council Meetings. If Life Members do not attend Central Council meetings for a 3 year period their name will be removed from the list of office holders.
3. Heads of Departments GFS Missions
 GFS Project
 GFS House
 Sick and Convalescent
 GFS Overseas
4. GFS Diocesan Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers or their deputies with power to vote.
5. Representatives from the Dioceses on the basis of one for every five Branches (or part of five). Branches having over 25 Members shall count as two Branches.
6. Hon. Treasurer
7. Wives of the Archbishops and Bishops currently in office

Also the following ex-officio NON VOTING members if not included above:

1. Central Chaplain
2. The Central Trustees

PROCEDURE

All Ireland Central Office: All administrative functions of the Society shall be carried out at the Central Office currently located at 36 Upper Leeson Street, Dublin 4. Central Council shall appoint an Administrator and if required an Assistant Administrator to run the Central office on such terms and conditions of employment as may be agreed. Minutes of the proceedings of every meeting including the Executive, Finance, Procedures, House and all other meetings, shall be taken by the Administrator or the Assistant Administrator and copied into a minute book and signed by the Chair or her representative at the next succeeding meeting.

Declaration of Interest: All Council Members with an interest in a Committee must declare this to the Central President and therefore absent themselves from the meeting or the relevant part thereof.

Attendance at Meetings: The Central President shall have the power to invite persons, not being members of Central Council to attend and address any meeting of the Council.

Elections: The election of Central Council officials: The Central President, Vice Presidents, Hon. Treasurer, All Heads of Departments (except GFS Overseas), GFS Project, House and Finance Committee shall retire triennially, but be eligible for one further three year period, the exception being the House Committee. The results of these triennial elections shall be declared at the May Council of that year, after an unsigned postal vote by all Council members.

Before elections the Central Office shall send out a nomination paper to every voting member of the Central Council. Nominators shall give the name, diocese, branch and office of the person nominated together with a short pen picture giving brief details, having ascertained their willingness to serve. Each paper must be signed by the nominator and returned to the Central Office. The President shall have the power to add to this list if sufficient nominations have not been received.

Finance: The financial year shall be from 1st January to 31st December. Diocesan reports and annual dues shall be sent to the Central Office by 31st May.

The working expenses of Central Office shall be paid out of Central funds, and Diocesan expenses out of Diocesan funds.

Central Chaplain: Central Council shall appoint a Central Chaplain who will conduct services on behalf of the Society when requested, including Commission Services. The Chaplain should be available to address any pastoral needs which may arise within the Society, (including those resident in GFS House accommodation).

CENTRAL COUNCIL ROLE

1. The overall management of the Society and all policy decisions regarding the Society are the ultimate responsibility of the Central Council.
2. To hold three regular meetings of the Central Council each year. The Central President may call an extraordinary meeting of the Central Council at not less than ten days notice, but no other business shall be transacted at this special meeting other than that for which it has been called. Such a special Central Council meeting may also be called at the request in writing of six members of Central Council, of whom two shall be Diocesan Presidents.
3. To consider annual reports and recommendations from the various Committees.
4. There shall be an Executive Committee consisting of Central President, Vice Presidents, Hon. Treasurer and Head of House. This committee shall meet as required by the Central President with powers delegated to it by Central Council. The quorum shall consist of the Central President (who shall have a casting vote) and three other members of the Committee.
5. To receive annual financial statements and to ratify the financial proposals of its Committees as and when they arise.
6. To set up a sub-committee of Central Council for any special purpose.
7. Any motion to alter this constitution must be passed by a majority of not less than two thirds of the voting members of Central Council present in person or by proxy.

STANDING ORDERS OF COUNCIL

1. Not less than fourteen days notice shall be given to members of Central Council of the agenda and date of the next meeting. Notices of motion of which notice has not been handed in at a previous meeting should be forwarded to the All Ireland Central Office for inclusion in the agenda, four weeks before the date of the next meeting.
2. Eleven members of Central Council shall form a quorum, including the President who has a casting vote.
3. The President may, with the consent of the meeting, vary the order of the agenda, and shall decide questions of order and interpretation of rules.

THE TRUSTEES

1. Central Trustees, nominated by Central Council, shall hold the property of the Society as nominees of the Society.
2. The number of Central Trustees shall be not more than five and not less than three.
3. Central Trustees shall be ex-officio members of the Finance Committee and of Central Council.
4. Central Council may by a resolution passed by a majority of not less than two thirds of the voting members of Central Council present in person, remove and/or replace all or any of the Central Trustees.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

1. This Committee shall be responsible for the financial business of the Society, subject to ratification by Central Council.
2. This Committee shall consist of all Diocesan Presidents together with not more than seven, and not less than five, members of Central Council. Members are elected triennially by Central Council with an option to serve one additional consecutive term.
3. This Committee through the Hon. Treasurer shall present a statement of the financial condition of the Society to the Central Council, at least once a year.
4. The Committee may recommend investments to be made by the Society.
5. The Committee may recommend annual budgets to all committees and may have the power to allocate extra funding when necessary.
6. The Committee shall review expenses and salaries annually.
7. The Committee shall appoint auditors, such appointment to be ratified by Central Council.
8. The Committee shall meet at least twice a year.
9. The Central President may invite others to join this Committee.

PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

1. This Committee will make recommendations to Central Council regarding the general updating of the Society's training and programmes.
2. This Committee shall consist of:
 - Central President
 - Nine elected GFS members
3. This Committee shall be elected triennially by Central Council with powers to co-opt should a vacancy arise.
4. The Central President may invite others to join this Committee.

HOUSE COMMITTEE

1. GFS House accommodation shall not be started or closed without the consent of the Central Council.
2. G.F.S House regulations shall not be altered without the consent of Central Council.
3. The House Committee shall consist of:
 - Central President
 - Head of House (Chair) - Elected by Central Council
 - G.F.S. Chaplain
 - Treasurer of House - Elected by House Committee
 - 10 elected G.F.S. members.
4. This Committee shall be elected triennially by Central Council with power to co-opt to fill a vacancy.
5. The Committee may recommend the appointment or dismissal of the Warden to Central Council. The Warden may not be a member of the Committee but may be invited to attend meetings.
6. The Head of the House or a representative of the House Committee shall present reports to Central Council.
7. The Treasurer of the House shall present Annual Accounts to the Finance Committee and Central Council.

DIOCESAN COUNCILS - GENERAL ORGANISATION

1. The organisation of the Society in each Diocese shall be under the patronage of and sanction of the Bishop of the Diocese, who shall have the right to attend meetings of, and vote at, the Diocesan Council. He must sanction the nominations for Diocesan President. All Diocesan elections to take place in line with Central Office elections.
2. The affairs of the Society in each Diocese shall be managed by a Diocesan Council.
3. The Diocesan President should issue all Leaders' Cards in her Diocese.

Diocesan Councils shall consist of:

- A President
- Vice Presidents
- Life Members
- Diocesan Secretary
- Diocesan Treasurer
- Diocesan Missionary Secretary
- Heads of Departments as deemed necessary
- Branch Presidents, Secretaries, and Treasurers or their deputies.
- Representatives from each branch (the number being decided by the Diocese)
- Wife of the Bishop if not included in the above

1. Each Diocesan Council shall meet at least twice a year. Notices of motion shall be sent to the Diocesan Secretary at least 21 days before the next meeting, to be included in the agenda and to be sent to all Council members.
2. The Diocesan President shall be elected triennially and shall be eligible for re-election for a second term. After two consecutive terms office holders may retire for three years and then may, if elected, resume the same position. All elections to take place in line with Central Elections. Terms of office will commence immediately.
- 3a. The Diocesan Secretary shall call meetings of the Diocesan Council; send out the agenda to each member take minutes of the proceedings of each meeting and copy into minute book.
- 3b. The Diocesan Secretary must keep a list of all the names and addressees of Branch Secretaries and obtain from them annual reports. She should notify the All Ireland Central Office of any new leaders, or other changes on Council, in her Diocese. On receipt of information from Branch Secretary, should notify other Diocesan Secretaries about members moving district and commend to their new Diocese.
4. The Diocesan Treasurer shall receive annual subscriptions from each Branch for Central and Diocesan funds. Subscriptions for Central funds, together with the

Diocesan reports, shall be forwarded to the Central office by 31st May each year. Subscriptions for Diocesan funds shall be retained by the Diocesan Treasurer to cover Diocesan expenses.

5. The Diocesan Missionary and Project Secretary shall forward before the 31st May each year all monies collected during the year for Missionary and Project work to the All Ireland Secretaries of Missions and Projects.

G.F.S. BRANCHES

Branches may be Parochial or Diocesan

1. Parochial branches may only be established with the approval of the Diocesan President and the Rector of the Parish, who is Patron of the Branch. Central Office provides a small start up grant.
2. A Diocesan Branch may provide for senior members when there is not a Branch in their own Parish.

All leaders must be members of the Church of Ireland, or of a church in communion therewith, or with the consent of the Rector, others may be appointed. They should be commissioned at a Church Service when they make the GFS Members' Promise and receive a Leaders Card issued and signed by the Diocesan President. All leaders must receive relevant training.

Where a dispute or other issue arises out of the running or closure of a branch, the parties to the dispute or issue may, by mutual agreement, refer the matter to the branch President or branch Secretary, where the former does not exist. Failing that, it will be brought to the Rector and ultimately to the Diocesan President to enter into a process of conciliation, mediation or such other process of reconciliation or resolution as deemed appropriate. If the parties are not in agreement after this process a committee of three Diocesan Presidents will be chosen by the Central President, and, in consultation with the bishop or his representative, act as final arbitrators in the matter.

Every member, in all sections shall be enrolled and shall pay an annual subscription to the Society, the amount to be decided from time to time by Central Council, and she is entitled to wear the G.F.S. uniform.

Further directions for organising and running a branch may be found in the current Leaders' Handbook.

Income and Property

The income and property of the Society shall be applied solely towards the promotion of its purpose as set forth in this Constitution. No portion of the Society's income and property shall be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise however by way of profit to the members of the Society. No officer shall be appointed to any office of the body paid by salary or fees, or receive any remuneration or other benefit in money or money's worth from the body. However, nothing shall prevent any payment in good faith by the body of:

- a) reasonable and proper remuneration to any members of the body (not being an Officer) for any services rendered to the body;
- b) interest at a rate not exceeding 5% per annum on money lent by Officers or other members of the body to the body;
- c) reasonable and proper rent for premises demised and let by any member of the body (including any Officer) to the body;
- d) reasonable and proper out-of-pocket expenses incurred by any Officer in connection with their attendance to any matter affecting the body;
- e) fee, remuneration or other benefit in money or money's worth to any Company of which an Officer may be a member holding not more than one hundredth part of the issued capital of such Company.

Winding-Up

If upon the winding up or dissolution of the body there remains, after the satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, any property whatsoever, it shall not be paid to or distributed among the members of the body. Instead, such property shall be given or transferred to some other charitable institution or institutions having main objects similar to the main objects of the body. The institution or institutions to which the property is given or transferred shall prohibit the distribution of its or their income and property among its or their members to an extent at least as great as is imposed on the body under or by virtue of Clause 6 hereof. Members of the body shall select the relevant institution or institutions at or before the time of dissolution, and if and so far as effect cannot be given to such provisions, then the property shall be given or transferred to some charitable object.

Additions, Alterations and Amendments

No addition, alteration or amendment shall be made to or in the provisions of this Constitution for the time being in force unless the Revenue Commissioners shall have previously approved the same in writing.

Keeping of Accounts

Annual audited accounts shall be kept and made available to the Revenue Commissioners on request.

Signed J E Higgins
Chairperson

Signed Pamela Strong
Vice-Chairperson

Signed Paul Smytan
Hon. Treasurer

Date 23/10/10

Central Office
36 Upper Leeson Street
Dublin 4

SOLICITORS
O'Keefe & Moore
31 Molesworth Street
Dublin 2

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