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General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and  
Welfare Funds speech. 15 November 1957.

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ADDRESS BY RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN,  
Executive Vice Chairman, United Jewish Appeal

at General Assembly of Council Jewish Federations  
and Welfare Funds, New Orleans, La. Nov. 15, 1957

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: We just heard a beautifully delineated presentation of what took place in Israel during ten years under conditions of great duress and difficulty, and we were left with a promise and the hope of what might be possible to do in the next ten years, if we continue to give to this matter the devotion and the zeal and the love which we have given in this first decade. When that promise can be made, as it was so clearly by Mr. Stock, the fulfillment of it becomes all the more important since it is clear that the decision lies in our hands, and not in any external factors.

My role here today is not to talk about the next ten years, but to try to talk about the next one. Before talking about 1958, I should like to attempt to put 1957 into its proper perspective, so that we can see what we were faced with and what we did.

A few weeks ago, in Israel, when our Study Mission had the privilege of spending some time with the Prime Minister, Mr. Ben-Gurion, before he was so sadly wounded, he said that Jewish history has never pampered the Jewish people. And in 1957, the Jewish people certainly were not pampered by what happened in the world. 1957 is almost over now and we can take an assessment of it. We tried to estimate at the beginning of the year what the caseload would be which we, the people - the Jewish people collectively - would have to try to handle. We said there might be 100,000 people who would be in need, in danger, in trouble, and now that we are close to the end of that time we see that those estimates were not incorrect.

During the year gone by, and the year by the way I am giving you is the Jewish year, October '56 to October '57, some 82,000 people were moved to Israel and some 20,000 people were moved and resettled to other parts of the world, the United States, Canada, Australia, South America and Western Europe. This makes a total of 102,000 - a rather spectacular record in terms of the events of the low period of



immigration to which Mr. Stock referred when he said that over a period of four years, 1952 to 1955. Israel received only 90,000 immigrants.

The 82,000 who came into Israel during this past year, constituted a change, not just quantitatively, but also qualitatively. Because of these 82,000 some 42,000 were from Eastern Europe, indicating that we are obviously entering a new historic epoch. Of the balance, 23,000 came from North Africa, 13,000 came from Egypt, 4,000 came from other places. That made up the 82,000. And of the 20,000 who went elsewhere, 12,000 went to the U.S., Canada, Britain and Australia, 3,000 went to Latin America, 5,000 are in Western Europe, most of them still awaiting permanent resettlement, which will have to occur during 1958.

This is the record of the past year, and for these 100,000 people — 102,000 — who were "handled", if you will pardon the vulgarity of that mechanical word, which doesn't anywhere near explain the love, efficiency and devotion with which Jewish Agency and JDC and United Hias personnel took care of these people.

For these 102,000 people the United Jewish Appeal raised in its Emergency Rescue Fund approximately \$30,000,000. It's obvious that there was a large and inordinate deficit and there are many who have asked me how it was that these 102,000 people could be taken care of with the Rescue Fund having achieved the results it did.

The answer is clear. During this past year, the Jewish Agency and the Government of Israel went into an extraordinary amount of debt, far above and beyond anything that they would have liked to have done or even anticipated having to do. Yet it was done because it was quite obvious that in terms of the value of human life, no financial step could be permitted to be a deterrent, and all kinds of financial complexities were entered into in this past year to achieve the result. Well, that is the report on 1957.

What is the prognosis for 1958? Let me list it for you as quickly as I can, country by country. Twice in the last five months I have gone abroad in order to try to understand for myself, that with which we may be faced. I spent time



in Europe and in Israel during July and again during October. And this is the way it looks to me.

In Morocco, the situation continues to be one in which there is a constant pressure from below on the part of the Jews to leave. The economic situation there has deteriorated to an alarming and depressing point. The internal political struggle in the Moroccan Government --- concerning which you probably will hear a great deal more in the six months ahead centers around the fact that there are many who would like to draw Morocco closer to the orbit of the Arab League or the Arab states, or the Arab point of view. While admittedly there are those in Morocco who would like to orient her in the direction of the West, that tug-of-war holds an ominous warning for the Jewish population of Morocco, which it well understands, and so there is this constant pressure from below for people to leave, even in the face of the greatest obstacles and difficult rulings of the Moroccan Government.

Nevertheless, the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior itself announced four days ago that during the last three months it had granted 5,000 passports for Jews to leave, saying in this communique that these passports were granted for Jews to go to France and Spain and Italy, but that it is well-known to the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior that these Jews were, of course, all going to Israel.

Let's take this for a hint, which it might well be, that they will grant visas at the rate of 5,000 a quarter. And if they do, then it's clear that there might be as many as 20,000 Jews who would be able to get out of Morocco next year.

As far as Tunisia is concerned, the problem there is slightly different. A friendly government dedicated to the principles of no discrimination against Jews but equally dedicated to the principle which in Tunisia is called integration, and the word integration in Tunisia means Jews shall integrate into the Tunisian culture patterns, which are predominantly Moslem.

Against this the sensitive and feeling Jews of Tunisia rebel, and there is a slow but constant emigration of Jews from that country --- 2,000 --- 3,000 a year go



to Israel. Meanwhile, 1,000 to 2,000 a year go to France. The community continues to dwindle.

As far as Algeria is concerned, I can only say that I would not like to be in the position of an Algerian Jew at this moment with the civil war raging in the country unabated and apparently without solution, except possibly in more bloody forms before it reaches its climax.

He is sitting on the fence. Both sides press the Jews to give allegiance. The Arab terrorists say to the Jews, "you must stand up with us or if you don't when we get our independence you will see what we will do to you."

Some of the European French elements on the other hand, say "you Jews are French." And they all are. Of the 130,000 Jews in Algeria, all but 3,000 are French citizens. The French add, "and if you are French you must take your stand with us."

Those are Algeria's Jews — caught in the middle of a dilemma (and the whole community of Algeria obviously in a sensitive position) trying to weigh imponderable I would not be surprised if — perhaps not in 1958, but at some time in the future — there was a large outflow of Jews from Algeria.

As far as Egypt is concerned, during this past year 25,000 Egyptian Jews came out. 14,000 went to Israel, 11,000 went elsewhere. Many of them are in Western Europe waiting to be resettled. You will find them here in the United States during 1958. For several thousand of them will come here. So there are 25,000 out, and still 25,000 in.

We had a report in Paris from a Christian lady social worker, who was the first objective outside observer to make a study of the Jewish community of Egypt. Jewish observers are unable to go in. Her comments were quite clear and added up to a clear conclusion. There is at the moment a rather false and illusory sense of security among the remaining Jews in Egypt, some of whom have had their businesses and their properties restored. This has happened to very few — but to enough so that the population has quieted down somewhat.

The International Red Cross is still operating in Egypt, this gives the Jews



the feeling of security. It has been said that if and when the International Red Cross leaves Egypt, the Jewish population will flee in panic.

The observer's comment which was the most important as far as I was concerned, was the fact that "Egypt is slowly but inevitably drifting behind the Iron Curtain", as she put it. If this is true, and I have no reason to doubt her judgment, then we will see a portion of Jewry slide behind the Iron Curtain in one area of the world, while we are trying to pull them out from behind the Iron Curtain.

The Jews in Egypt themselves also realize this. One who spoke to us in Israel said that if Nasser ever sets up detention camps again as he did a year ago they will be much more similar to Dachau.

The 25,000 Jews currently in Egypt then, may be anticipated to continue their departure at the rate of some 700 a month which has been the rate till now — and which may be accelerated given any unfavorable change in the situation.

Let me come now to Poland, which is a great new bright exciting chapter. And the report for last year is simply this. We took out of Poland 35,000 Jews, of whom 30,000 were resident Polish Jews and almost 5,000 were Polish Jews who had been repatriated from Russia to Poland.

Let me make it clear at the moment these repatriated Jews can no longer obtain passports. There are 10,000 of them recently in Poland. They continue to come in from Russia to Poland at the rate of about 1500 a month. They will pile up and pile up and bottle up and accumulate all during 1958. If the situation doesn't change and we don't anticipate that it will, none will be able to get out.

But these will accumulate there, and they are the group for whom the JDC has made its historic re-entry into Poland, to serve them, and their children. By the end of 1958 it is estimated that the group may reach a figure as large as 20,000

For the moment all that we can do for the repatriates is to provide services, relief amenities and welfare help through the JDC. But for the <sup>others</sup> exit possibilities are still open under the friendly policy of the Gomulka Government, which with its liberal attitude toward reuniting families permits Polish Jews proper to receive



passports to leave. And of those Polish Jews there are 35,000 still in Poland. It is estimated that of the 35,000 still there, perhaps 25,000 to 30,000 will be able to come out during the year ahead. If this proves to be so, it would be a wonderfully challenging and historic thing to be able to accomplish that task in the two years of 1957 and 1958. We would have rescued almost the whole of the remaining Polish Jewish population. (There are two East European countries concerning which I said nothing. These are Hungary and Rumania).

The hard core of the whole immigration story is simply this: From North Africa, from Egypt, from Poland, from those areas in Western Europe where there are still Jews from Egypt and Hungary waiting to be finally resettled, the prognosis for 1958 comes to a total of perhaps 80,000 people, of which it appears that some 70,000 will go to Israel and some 10,000 will be resettled elsewhere in the world, all of this by various agencies using UJA money, in whole, or in part.

Mr. Stock said that if immigration continues on the present scale or anything like it -- and I think when we talk about 80,000, we are talking about a large immigration -- outside aid to the people of Israel must increase in order to keep the backlog from becoming unmanageable.

This is the proposition which we put to you now. Immigration continues on a large scale, therefore foregin aid must increase. In Jerusalem when our Mission came to sum up its findings, it arrived at a recommendation which we shall present to our UJA National Conference a month from now, in mid-December, in New York, namely -- that the UJA seek from the communities and the leadership of the country,



a mandate to continue in 1958 some form of special fund to achieve those extra monies which are obviously called for by this program, which I have attempted, however inadequately, to describe.

We have invited to that conference Mr. Moshe Sharett, who for two years has been out of the Israel Cabinet. But sitting on the sidelines as he is, with the keen intellect which he possesses, he is in a position to give us — perhaps better than some one inside the government, or the Agency — that cool and calm appraisal which we require to understand the present situation. With the blessing of his personality and the value of his analysis, and with most importantly of all, your comprehension and understanding of the magnitude of this, <sup>we hope</sup> the program which we propose to put forward to the Jews of America, will receive their earnest support, their wholehearted cooperation.

There come times in endeavors of man, when lassitude or weariness or questioning begin to prevail. This dare not be one of those times. I have given you a long look at a program for a year ahead, and yet implicit in it, there is a long look at a program for <sup>a</sup>decade or two ahead, because you do not move whole populations of people from one country to another, you do not build a land and build a state in a year or two or five or ten. The question of endurance, of historic view, of long look, is required here, and I say that we must draw our strength from our deepest convictions concerning the value of Jewish survival, for that's what is at stake.

The history of our people has been a constant struggle to survive as a people. Leo Tolstoy gave us the credit of being an eternal people. To the end of being that, we protected our traditions, we taught them lovingly to our children, we staunchly defied prosecutors and inquisitors, we've shaken our fists against our enemies, we wept, when our wounded slowly bled under tyrant hammer blows, we have often gathered new strength to face another century and to migrate to another land, as we moved down the corridors of time, seeking peace for ourselves. Always we face the shining future, always we shrugged off the brutal past. Be-



cause we were a people determined to survive. But survival has a purpose beyond itself, or it must have, otherwise survival is merely the reflex action of an animal who tries to avoid the accidents of nature. Our survival does have a purpose. Its purpose is pure and simple. Our purpose is to help build the highest civilization on the face of the earth which man can achieve.

This is bold, this is the purpose for which the Jewish people live. For nothing less than this have we learned the secret of deathlessness, to build a society on earth in which justice shall be untainted, in which mercy shall overcome cruelty, in which peace shall be pursued with passion. This is the Jewish dream. To achieve this dream we have had to become an immortal people, because the road to it will be long. We have to be able to outlast the voyage down through endless time. To build a civilization for man, not just for Jews, but for man, was the noble theme of the prophets who sang their symphonies and which we, as their descendants, must relearn in every generation. In this generation, we have made a gigantic stride toward our immortality and our purpose, for we've rebuilt Israel, the heart and the hope and the seat of that monumental challenge which we call our destiny.

We Jews have played our role on many a stage in many a scattered continent, but the hard nucleus of the dream from which it emerges is a tiny spot of land on three continents, Asia, Africa, Europe, yet not on them, joining them all, that tiny spot of land which, like an atomic pile, was the ever-burning furnace that gave us our dream and our inspiration. This reconstituted Israel, the source of our idealism, the fountain-head of our dreams for a better world, the place where the prophets thundered and where the psalmists sang, this reconstituted Israel moves us a giant step ahead in our search for survival.

And it is to the support of this Israel, its land and its people, our brothers, that this generation owes its deepest obligation. For in and through this Israel, we shall renew our strength, rescue our wounded, restate our idealistic goal so that all mankind will be the gainer.



I firmly believe that American Jews are endowed with the thrilling meaning of this vision and will not let it slip through their fingers. American Jews may well turn out to be in history the most fortunate of all the deathless generations, or it may be given to them to make the dream come true.

American Jews shall labor without rest until the land is free and whole, until all the children of Israel who need its life-giving security are escorted there, until there is no pain anywhere in the world-wide body of Israel.

And when American Jews have done that they can rest upon their labors and call it good.

Thank you very much.





CLOSING REMARKS OF RABBI HERBERT A FRIEDMAN'S SPEECH

CJFWF NEW ORLEANS 11/15/57

Leo Tolstoy once said that the Jew is as everlasting as eternity itself. The story of our history has been our constant struggle to survive as a people. To this end we protect our traditions, teach them lovingly to our children, staunchly defy our persecutors and inquisitors, shake our fists against the enemy, weep when our wounded slowly bleed under a tyrant's hammer blows, gather new strength to face another century or another land to which we wander in search of a chance to live. We always face the shining future, always shrug off the brutal past, because we are a people determined to survive.

But survival must have a purpose beyond itself, otherwise it is merely the reflex action of an animal trying to avoid the accidents of nature. Our purpose is pure and simple -- to help build the highest civilization which man can achieve. For nothing less than this have we learned the secret of deathlessness. To build a society on earth in which justice shall be untainted, mercy shall subdue cruelty, and peace shall be pursued with passion is the Jewish dream. To achieve this dream we have had to become an immortal people, for the road to it will be long and we must be able to outlast the voyage through the corridors of human history. To build a civilization for man -- not just for Jews -- but for man was the noble theme of the symphonies which our prophets played in ancient days, and which we, their descendants, must relearn in every generation.

In this generation we have luckily made a gigantic stride, for we have rebuilt Israel, the hearth and home and seat of the monumental challenge which we call our destiny. We Jews have played our role on many a stage in many a scattered continent, but the hard nucleus of the dream and challenge was always the tiny rocky spit of land -- in Asia, in Africa, in Europe -- and yet not in them but the crossroads of all of them -- the tiny land which was like an atomic pile, the everburning furnace from which we drew our energy.

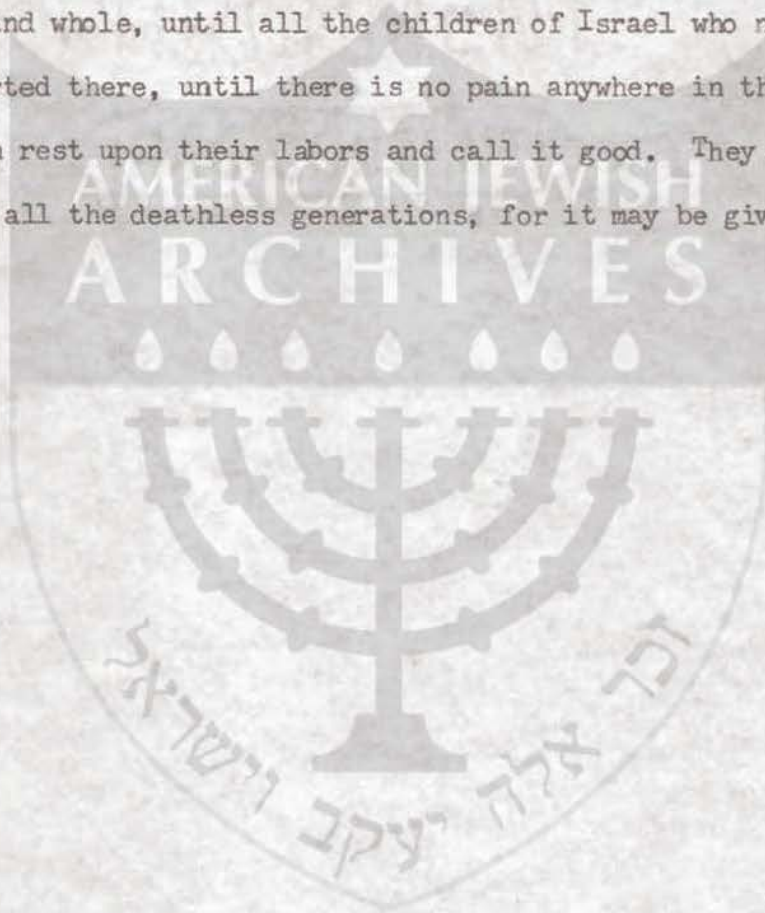
This reconstituted Israel, the source of our idealism, the fountainhead of our dreams for a better world, the place where the prophets thundered and the psalmists sang, moves us a giant step ahead in our purpose-filled survival. And it is to the support of this Israel, its land and people, our brothers, that this generation owes its deepest



obligation. For in and through this Israel, we shall renew our strength, rescue our wounded, restate our idealistic goals that all mankind may be the gainer.

I firmly believe that as the prophetic vision of a united humanity came from ancient Israel, so will renewed visions and insights come from modern Israel, to serve Jewish destiny with pride.

I firmly believe that American Jews are endowed with the thrilling meaning of this vision and will not let it slip through their fingers. They shall labor without rest until the land is free and whole, until all the children of Israel who need its life-giving security are escorted there, until there is no pain anywhere in the world-wide body of Israel. And then, they can rest upon their labors and call it good. They may be, in history, the most fortunate of all the deathless generations, for it may be given to them to make a dream come true.





1957 Peak Refugee Year

The year 1957 was a period that witnessed the most widespread dislocation of Jews in many years. The number of Jewish refugees who had to be assisted by various UJA agencies and brought to areas of resettlement rose to the striking figure of 102,000. They fled from Hungary, were expelled from Nasser's Egypt, and pushed their way out of North Africa where they could see no hope and no future. Tens of thousands more seized the opportunity to leave lands like Poland whose doors suddenly opened part way to let Jewish families reunite with their families in Israel.

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES  
Record Immigration to Israel

Close to 82,000 of these refugees were able to reach Israel. This was not only a spectacular record in terms of numbers as compared with immigration figures over many preceding years. It was also vastly different in character. Whereas the majority of recent newcomers had been reaching Israel from North Africa, in 1957 more than 42,000 came from Eastern Europe. Some 23,000 came from North Africa. Another 13,000 came from Egypt and almost 4,000 others from other points of origin. It was a "Now or Never" migration for most of these people. They had to get out immediately or perhaps never.

In addition to the 82,000 men, women and children who found their way to Israel, another 20,000 Jewish refugees emigrated to other lands. Of these 12,000 went to the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia. Some 3,000 found haven in Latin American countries. 5,000 are in Western Europe, many of whom are still waiting for permanent resettlement. Thus, UJA agencies in the last 12 months - October 1, 1956 to October 1, 1957 - were invaluable in the total movement of 102,000 Jews.

A most important development was the return to Poland of 14,000 Jewish repatriates from the Soviet Union and the resumption of the JDC's work in that country at the invitation of the Polish Government to help these friendless re-



turnees get desperately needed aid. These are now on the agenda of people who have to be helped in the last quarter of 1957 and in 1958.

#### Role of the 1957 Emergency Rescue Fund

To rescue and resettle these 102,000 people on the move, the United Jewish Appeal called for a 100 million dollar Emergency Rescue Fund this year. With political developments in Eastern Europe, the changes in North Africa, the shattering of the Egyptian Jewish community, these numbers swelled beyond all estimates. The Emergency Rescue Fund raised only 30 million dollars - less than 1/3 of the amount called for. Nevertheless, all these people were moved to safety and helped to be resettled. In order to do this, the main burdens of the economic deficit involved were imposed on the Jewish Agency and on the Government of Israel, both of which had to borrow heavily to meet the needs. This means, of course, that a large share of the burden was shifted to the shoulders of the already hard pressed population of Israel. We must take a hard look at these facts and also take them into consideration in planning the 1958 campaign.

#### 80,000 Emigrants foreseen in 1958

What needs are foreseen in 1958? Some - and they are most urgent - we can predict with certainty. Yet the future is only in part ours to determine. The future for scores of thousands who will once again find themselves without homes or status or a way to support themselves, depends in large part on what will happen in Casablanca, Warsaw, Budapest, Cairo and other key European and North African cities.

This much is certain. In 1958 we can foresee up to 70,000 immigrants entering Israel and another 10,000 being assisted to reach other countries of the free world. The largest number of these people will be coming from Eastern Europe. Jews are still leaving North Africa in goodly numbers even according to recent official reports from Morocco which stated that the Ministry of the Interior had granted



5,000 passports to Jews in the last three months. There is every indication that 25,000 to 30,000 Jews will leave Eastern Europe, primarily Poland, next year, and they will be the core of the settlement program which the UJA agencies will have to meet. It must not be forgotten that there are approximately 25,000 Jews still in Egypt comprising the second half of the population. The first half left during 1957 and it is felt that the majority of the second half will make their way out during 1958. The balance to Israel may be expected from a variety of countries where extremely heavy pressures exist for Jewish emigration.

#### Significance of Polish Emigration

When we speak of Polish Jewry, our words can only summon up the black memory of one of the greatest Jewish communities in history murdered and tortured and reduced to a handful by Nazi brutality. Before World War II there were 3,250,000 Jews in Poland. Merely to think of their sufferings and the losses incurred must chill every soul. At the time of the Kielce pogrom in 1946 there were 250,000 Jews in Poland. Many fled to DP camps in Germany, to new hardships, new privations, new periods of waiting. UJA funds helped rescue the great majority of these. Today there are 45,000 Jews in Poland which includes 10,000 repatriates from Russia. Last year thousands of these Polish Jews thronged to the authorities asking for passports so that they could reunite with their families in Israel. The Gomulka regime humanely opened its gates to permit this reunion and Israel was and is ready to take them in.

The rescue of Polish Jews has proceeded in an orderly way with the cooperation of the Polish Government. We must continue to take advantage of the opportunities provided by events. It is a historical imperative that we help bring to Israel all who wish to leave Poland. At the same time the JDC, through the UJA, must be given the wherewithal to continue to help the 10,000 repatriates who are not able to leave, and who may be expected to double in number during 1958, as more continue to come from Russia.



### Unmet Needs in Israel

In addition to these considerations we are faced with an overwhelming problem of absorbing all those who came during this flood of 1957 as well as those of prior years. Over 18,000 families of immigrants are still living in the demoralizing surroundings of the maabaroth. There is a housing crisis in Israel - the worst in years. New housing must be built at a much faster pace to cope with the present rate of influx. The main retarding factor is lack of funds, not lack of skilled construction personnel or supplies. New settlements must be created and newcomers who arrive cannot be considered off our minds and off our consciences until they have been started on the way to self-support.

### Special Fund Necessary

With all these considerations before our minds and before our hearts, the consideration of 1957's unmet needs and the clear signals which herald the 1958 large scale migration - it must be clear that the UJA is morally bound to turn to the Jews of America in 1958 for support once again for a special fund over and above the goal of the regular campaign. Our Fourth UJA Study Mission, made up of 100 alert and informed leaders, saw the need for this in October during their visits in Europe and Israel. They talked with the leaders of the Jewish Agency and the Israel Government and then decided among themselves that they would present a recommendation to the UJA Annual National Conference to be held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York on December 14th and 15th. This recommendation urges that in 1958 the UJA be given the mandate to gather special funds which will ensure the complete absorption of those refugees who have come and who are continuing to come to Israel and other free lands.

I can only hope that the representatives of America's Jewish communities will back up this recommendation and it is our fervent hope that this year these communities will respond in full measure to the standards and goals which must be set. Once again lives are at stake. The future is at stake. We have no alternative as men of conscience but to respond with wide open hearts to this new call.