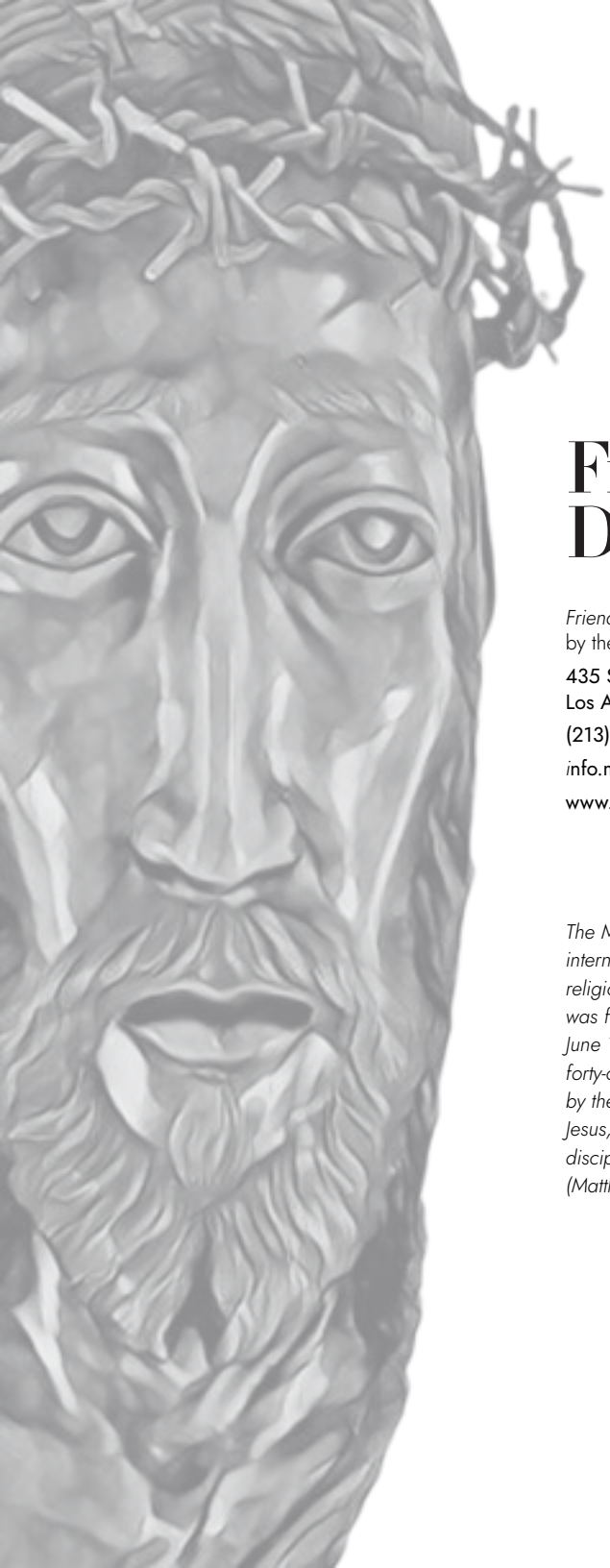
Friends & Disciples

Fall 2026
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MISSIONARIES OF JESUS - AMERICAS





Friends & Disciples

Friends & Disciples is published quarterly by the Missionaries of Jesus.

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The Missionaries of Jesus is an international and multicultural religious missionary community. It was founded in the Philippines on June 12, 2002 by a group of forty-one men called and inspired by the mission and humanity of Jesus, who calls us to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

from the editor

Through Baptism, we die and rise again with Jesus Christ, becoming children of God. At this pivotal moment, we join the Church—the Body of Christ—and receive our calling to participate in God's mission. Mission, after all, is not reserved exclusively for the clergy and religious; it belongs to all the baptized.

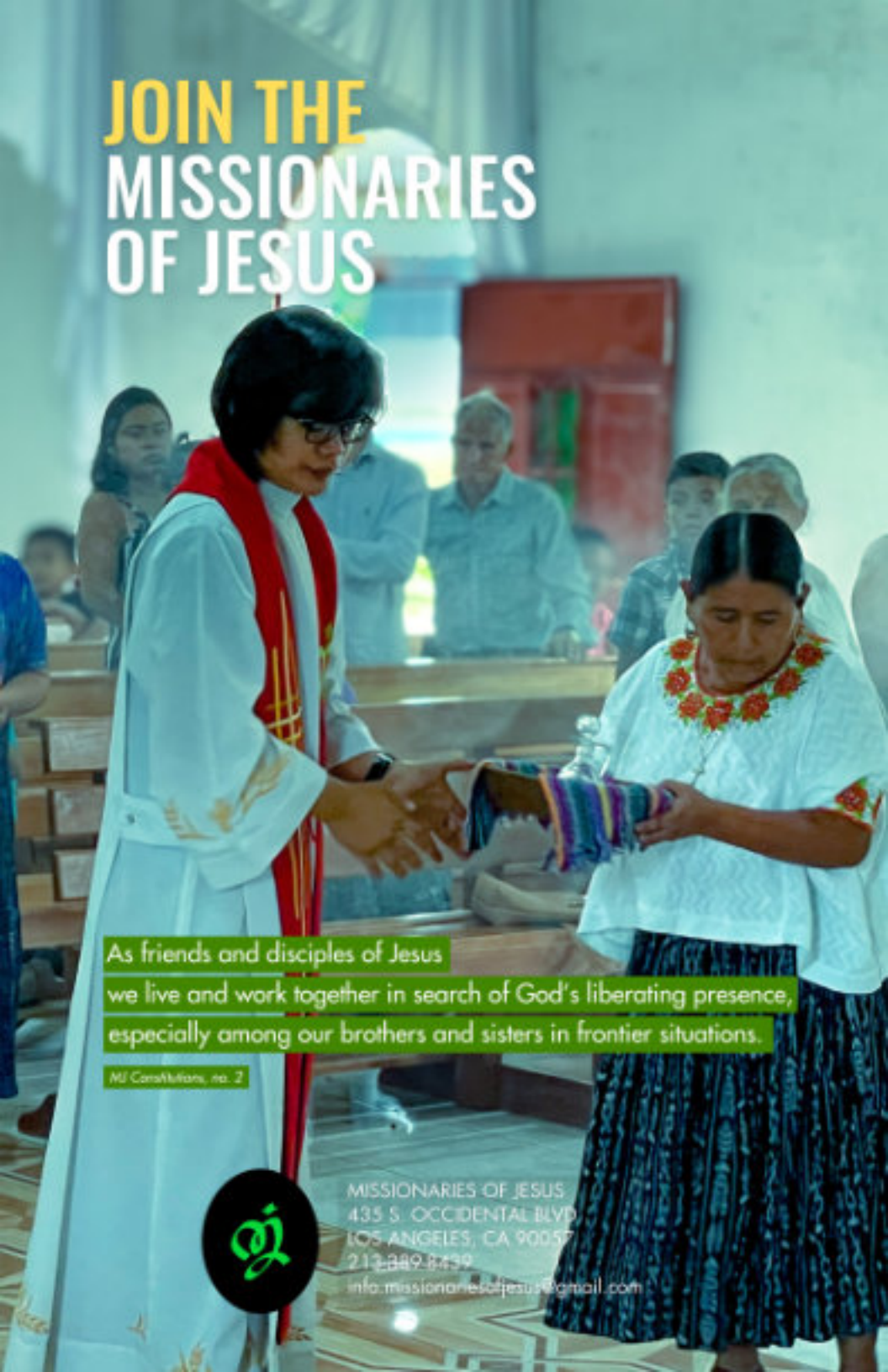
From its founding, the Missionaries of Jesus (MJ) has remained deeply rooted in this understanding of the *missio Dei* (the mission of God). From the outset, the MJs have sought to invite others—especially the laity—to share in this work as partners and fellow pilgrims on the journey. It is an invitation to heed God's call in our present time and to recognize the face of Christ in everyone we meet each day.

Over the years, many have answered this call. We have been continually blessed by their presence and inspired by their dedication to following Jesus. Featured in this issue of *Friends & Disciples* is a group of MJ lay associates from California who answered the call through their work in healthcare. Gloria Venzon recounts how a chance encounter with a visiting MJ missionary at Saint Kevin Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles sparked this ministry, culminating in their recent medical and dental mission to the Philippines. Several of the founding lay associates, along with recent mission volunteers, also share their personal experiences.

This community represents just one of several MJ lay associate groups journeying alongside the Missionaries of Jesus, and we look forward to highlighting others in upcoming issues of this bulletin. These lay associates are living proof that mission is universal and that we are each called to serve where we are most effective: right where we are, using who we are. God calls us, and we respond with the unique gifts He has provided. Ultimately, these associates answered the call not merely through their professional expertise, but through generous, dedicated hearts.

To our benefactors, donors, and faithful prayer partners: thank you for your unwavering support. You are truly our fellow pilgrims on this journey of mission!

Joey Ganio Evangelista, MJ



JOIN THE MISSIONARIES OF JESUS

As friends and disciples of Jesus
we live and work together in search of God's liberating presence,
especially among our brothers and sisters in frontier situations.

MJ Constitutions, no. 2

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Whatsoever You Do to the Least

Gloria Venzon

It all began with an invitation…

In June 2012, Rene and Marissa Mariano, alongside Rene and Chie Calugcugan, attended noon Mass at Saint Kevin Parish in Los Angeles. Afterward, they graciously accepted an invitation to join the Missionaries of Jesus (MJ) family day celebration. As they were preparing to leave, Fr. Joseph Guerrero sat at their table. Upon learning that Rene and Chie were dentists, he encouraged them to join the Missionaries of Jesus as lay associates.

Though already a prayerful couple, their desire to put their faith into action prompted them to respond positively to the invitation. As they searched for a home parish to anchor their mission, the Missionaries of Jesus at Saint Kevin answered their prayers,

The first ever medical-dental mission of the Missionaries of Jesus was done in the MJ mission station in Tierra Blanca in Guatemela. Here they are in front of the chapel in one of the Christian communities.





The volunteers of the first medical-dental mission left the familiar comforts of California to face the challenges of the life of the Q'eqchi in Tierra Blanca.

and Fr. Melanio Viuya gladly accepted the role of Spiritual Director.

They decided to provide dental assistance to the people of Guatemala, where the Missionaries of Jesus are present. They gathered eight members to join them on this inaugural mission. With only two dentists, the team successfully served 300 people. The following year, the team grew to 16 members, and by the third year, 36

The temporary sleeping quarters of the volunteers was not exactly five star but it was comfortable enough.



volunteers had joined the cause.

During one of their subsequent mission appeals, a Filipino parishioner approached them and asked if they could extend their services to the Philippines, their homeland. In 2014, their first Philippine medical-dental mission was launched. To date, the mission has grown to include approximately 130 volunteers.

This is a beautiful testament to how a chance encounter—or perhaps a providential one—can lead to a decade of service. What started as a simple post-Mass invitation from Fr. Joseph Guerrero has grown from two dentists into a massive volunteer effort of 130 people. It is truly inspiring to see how the mission evolved from serving Guatemala to returning to their roots in the Philippines, proving that "faith in action" can scale incredibly fast when people are given a clear path to help others.

Missionaries of Jesus (MJ) Medical-Dental Mission 2026

February 6–8, 2026 | Diocese of Kalookan, Philippines





The celebration of the Holy Eucharist was an integral part of the MJ medical-dental mission.

The Missionaries of Jesus successfully conducted their 2026 Medical-Dental Mission from February 6–8 in Hulong Duhat, Malabon City, and Tangos, Navotas City, under the Diocese of Kalookan, Philippines. A total of 1,000 individuals were served—500 at each location—through the dedicated efforts of volunteers and mission partners.

This year's theme, "To Evolve as Missionaries," came to life with the participation of

The volunteers bridged the cultural divide with kindness and patience.





Undeterred by the heat and the crying of scared children, the volunteers valiantly continued to serve the people.



It was also a fun time for the children who learned how to care for their teeth and helped the other children learn about it in an interactive way.

many first-time volunteers from both the United States and the Philippines. The team included medical professionals—doctors, dentists, pharmacists, hygienists, nurses, and Department of Health dental teams—as well as non-medical volunteers, including priests and seminarians, who generously offered their time and energy.

In response to needs identified in previous years, this year's outreach also included the distribution of rice and sardines to families—an initiative warmly received by the local communities.

Approximately 130 volunteers answered the call. Special recognition goes to Bro. Nollan Jed Mendoza, MJ for his outstanding work in organizing the mission. Despite it being his first time leading the effort, he successfully managed pre-mission preparations, hotel arrangements, transportation logistics, catering services, and the overall scheduling of activities. His leadership was truly remarkable.

Heartfelt thanks also go to Marissa Magpayo and her son, Connor, who arrived early in the Philippines to assist with preparations. Alongside Bro. Jed Mendoza, their efforts in procuring medications, inspecting accommodations, and organizing

The second medical-dental mission took place at the Malita Tagakaulo Mission in the Philippines in 2014.





Once again the volunteers went beyond their comfort zones to travel to the mission station in Mindanao. Fr. Elmo Tactacan, MJ (extreme left) extends a hand to one of the volunteers to help him alight from the truck as Fr. Melanio Viuya, MJ (third from left) looks on.

supplies were invaluable to the mission's success.

Day 1: Spiritual Preparation (Friday, February 6)

The team arrived and checked in at the Nice Hotel in Caloocan City. Volunteers were welcomed with a hearty breakfast of traditional kakanin, fresh buko juice, and coffee, followed later by a homemade merienda featuring Malabon's famous pancit, generously provided by Bro. Jed Mendoza's group.

Following breakfast, volunteers participated in a full-day retreat led by Fr. Abbe Pinuela, MJ. His message centered on the spirit of mission, reminding everyone that true service requires sacrifice and a willingness to step beyond one's comfort zone. The day concluded with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, grounding the team in faith before the work ahead.

Day 2: Service in Malabon (Saturday, February 7)





Men, women, and children came down to the mission station from the different Tagakolu communities in the highlands to avail of the free medical and dental services that the volunteers offered. Hungry and tired, the people patiently waited for their turn.

The team traveled to Hulong Duhat, Malabon City, where hundreds of residents were already waiting for care. Volunteers quickly mobilized into their assigned roles, creating an efficient and compassionate environment.

Medical and dental services were provided throughout the day, with a brief pause for lunch. Volunteers enjoyed snacks of kakanin and pancit malabon provided by Bro. Jed, along with delicious banana cue courtesy of Emily Marcelo. The mission day concluded at 4:00 PM, followed by a shared dinner before the team returned to the hotel.

Day 3: Service in Navotas (Sunday, February 8)

The mission continued in Tangos, Navotas City, where another 500 individuals received care. Early preparations by Fr. Abbe and his team ensured that supplies were ready and operations ran smoothly.

Volunteers were served local snacks, including boiled saging saba, kamote, arroz caldo, and ginataang mais. Additionally, Joe Esmeralda treated the volunteers to *turon*. The team's outstanding organization and teamwork allowed for a seamless



flow of service. The mission wrapped up at 3:00 PM, after which volunteers returned to the hotel to prepare for their departure.

A Mission of Faith and Action

The 2026 Friends of MJ, in collaboration with the Missionaries of Jesus, demonstrated what can be achieved through unity, compassion, and faith. As the mission continues to grow and evolve, so too does its impact—bringing both healing and hope to the communities it serves.

Brothers and sisters, we encourage you to join us. There are many ways to help. You can become a prayer partner to pray for the success of each mission, support us financially, or join us in raising funds. Furthermore, you do not need a medical background to participate; general volunteers are always needed as lay associates to handle logistics, patient registration, and hospitality.

If you cannot go on the mission yourself, your financial support truly makes a difference. Your generosity helps bring the Good News to the poor, the needy, and the marginalized. We consider every dollar important, and every donor is the reason we can continue this vital work.







The creativity of volunteers becomes apparent during medical-dental missions. Due to a lack of equipment, a volunteer in Caloocan turns her smartphone flashlight into a dental light to assist both the patient and the dentist.

Who to Contact:

Rene and Marissa Mariano

Tel. no.: (818) 523-3822

Email: rene.mariano51@gmail.com

Upcoming Medical-Dental Mission:

January 29 to 31, 2027

Sto. Niño Parish San Mateo, Rizal

Diocese of Antipolo, Philippines





During the medical-dental mission, fatigue often creeps in but the volunteers remain laser focused.

From those who answered the call...



I was given the opportunity to serve in the Missionaries of Jesus Medical and Dental mission in Malabon and Navotas on February 6 to 8, 2026. It was my first time joining this specific mission, though volunteering is not new to me. Providing free medical and dental services to underserved, low-income individuals left me with a profound sense of reward. It was humbling to witness the genuine happiness and gratitude of the patients as they left. This is where service turns into wholehearted joy.

Rosemarie Sumadsad

The elderly are brought to the medical-dental mission by their own family members.





Medical-dental missions are often inundated by patients from low-income families. The sight can be overwhelming at first, but good preparation, teamwork, and prayer help volunteers maintain their cool throughout the day.



In February 2025, I had my first opportunity to join the Friends of MJ mission in the Philippines. My second mission followed early this year in Malabon and Navotas, where we continued offering medical and dental services alongside distributing bags of rice and canned goods. It was a deeply moving experience that stayed with me. I saw firsthand the anxiety of parents for their children's health, and likewise, the worries of children for their elderly parents.

One moment that stayed with me was seeing a young father holding his child, standing patiently in line and hoping for immediate care. The worry in his eyes was something I could truly feel. In that moment, I realized that any of us could be in his shoes. It made me reflect on how fortunate my own family is—blessed with good educations and stable jobs. From that experience, one truth became clear to me: it is truly better to give than to receive.

Elmer Carlos

Have you already included the MISSIONARIES OF JESUS in your living will?



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It is not rare to see fathers bring their children to the medical-dental mission. In this photo, two men take a look at a prescription from one of the volunteer doctors.



MJ seminarians have also been assisting in the medical-dental missions organized by the MJ lay associates of Los Angeles. The two young men on the left are seminarians assisting in the food distribution.



Participating in this medical/dental mission was one of the most humbling and unforgettable experiences for my wife, Pat, and I. This was our second mission to the Philippines. Traveling to poor communities, we witnessed firsthand the challenges many families face in accessing basic healthcare. As part of the team, we helped provide medical and dental services and distribute essential medicines.

What struck us deeply was not just the level of need, but the incredible gratitude and resilience of the people. Despite their circumstances, they welcomed us with warm smiles. This experience opened our eyes to the importance of compassion, service, and using whatever skills we have to make a difference. We are deeply honored to be a part of this mission, and God willing, we will continue to serve whenever the opportunity arises.

Joe and Pat Esmeralda



God is an awesome God. He makes a way where there seems to be no way, working in ways we cannot see. I was one of those who helped plan the very first MJ medical-dental mission, ready to go both physically and spiritually. However, circumstances beyond my control prevented me from traveling. Though I felt terrible, my wife, Marissa, crossed barriers and joined the mission in my. I have been able to join her every year since. In each mission, I see the face of Jesus in every person we serve and in every co-missionary we work beside.

Rene Mariano

Access to medical doctors in the Philippines can either be very difficult or too expensive for the ordinary citizen. Volunteer doctors are well aware of this and do their best to give each patient they encounter all the attention they may need.





My parents have been asking me to join them on this mission for years, and I'm so glad I finally went. The Missionaries of Jesus provide a welcoming and supportive community for both the volunteers and the people they help. Working in the pharmacy department, I assisted young children by dispensing their prescribed medications and explaining the instructions to their parents. Communicating with them in Tagalog allowed me to connect deeply with the patients and my own cultural roots. Sacrificing a few days of comfort to serve a community in need was incredibly fulfilling, and I returned to the States with a profound sense of gratitude.

Francis Mariano

Every space is maximized in the venues of the medical-dental missions to be able to attend to as many patients as possible.





The Medical-Dental Mission in Navotas was one of the most unique experiences of my life, and I am incredibly grateful to have been a part of it. Despite the language barrier, I made many new friends and touched many lives. Being born, raised, and currently living in Southern California is an ultimate privilege—but getting to see how others live under such different circumstances was both humbling and inspiring. I returned to the States with a renewed perspective and a deeper gratitude for life.

Neal Clemente





We all have a stake in the health and well-being of the poor. I believe in a world where no child should die from a preventable illness. I am eternally grateful that God led me to the Missionaries of Jesus because alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much. We can all give back in different ways, and your philanthropic collaboration can help shape our world for the better. The experience was both heartwarming and heartbreaking—and ultimately, deeply humbling.

Dennis Clemente



Before we started this ministry, I was given the opportunity to read the Responsorial Psalm at a Sunday Mass we attended at Saint Kevin. The people's response was, 'The Lord hears the cry of the poor.' That response struck me to the core and inspired me to help establish this medical-dental mission.

Through the guidance of the Missionaries of Jesus, our first mission came to fruition, followed by many more—most recently in Navotas and Malabon. My wife, Chie, who is also a dentist, and I remain deeply committed to this ministry. I hope you can join us in the future. Together, we can make a meaningful difference.

Dr. Rene Calugcugan



Despite the long day, the heat, the humidity, and the fatigue, all the volunteers in our medical-dental missions end the day with a deep sense of joy that they wear on their faces.



CONSIDER GIVING THE MISSIONARIES OF JESUS A PLANNED GIFT AS YOUR LEGACY TO HELP BRING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. YOU MAY BE GOD'S ANSWER TO THE PRAYERS OF THE MISSIONARIES OF JESUS AND THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE.

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- *HEIRS TO YOUR ESTATE, make Missionaries of Jesus heirs to your estate – cash, securities, jewels, arts, your home, or other real estate;*
- *BENEFICIARY TO LIFE INSURANCE, include the Missionaries of Jesus as one of the beneficiaries in your life insurance policy; and*
- *BENEFICIARY TO IRA OR OTHER RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS, name the Missionaries of Jesus as beneficiary to your IRA or other retirement accounts.*

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We are called to assist in the emergence of a new face of the Church and we journey together integrating into the life of the people, in reclaiming their stories, in the struggle of self-determination, in the celebration of life and culture. This is our story in retelling God's Story of mission. May the passion for God's mission continue to burn in our hearts.