



February 3, 2022

*"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong."*

1 Corinthians 16:13/NIV

Dear Friends,

2021 is behind us. Wow! What a year!

For FGCI and for me, personally, 2020 and 2021 were challenging-yet-character-building years of learning to trust God through a lot of loss. In February last year, Domnica "Mama Nootsie" Ristea, our dearly-loved president (for more than 20 years) of Romanian sister organization *Fundatia For God's Children International*, informed us that she was turning 70 and believed it was time for her to retire from full-time work. She and her husband Sergiu (our fleet manager in Romania) retired on December 1, 2021.

At our quarterly FGCI Board of Directors meeting in April of 2021, seventeen-year staff member and FGCI Associate Director Jeremy Befort announced his resignation from FGCI in order to begin a ministry of his own dedicated to discipling Romanian and Moldovan children online. Jeremy left our ministry, late June last year. At the end of 2020 we lost two Romanian FGCI staff members (Mihaela and Doina) from our Sunshine (Therapy) Room ministry in Zebil, Romania. They left to take higher paying jobs with the State.

Add to this that at the end of July 2019 we lost our dear American missionary couple Eli and Sheena Davidson (serving with FGCI for nine years in Babadag, Romania), who needed to return to the USA on behalf of one of their sons with special learning challenges. Then, on December 23 of 2021, my dear brother in Christ and co-founder (in 1995) of For God's Children International, Walt Blankenship, died. [And, on a personal note, one of my dear cousins, Lynn Ferguson, passed on to be with the

Lord late last summer. This year, on January 25, Duane King, beloved brother in Christ, good friend and my boss at Deaf Missions for 27 years, went to be with the Lord.]

It was a couple of years of heavy losses for me and for FGCI. But, through it all, we have learned so much about the power of prayer and how amazingly God provides for His children—even in challenging times.

During these two pandemic years we've ALL suffered through, we have seen the beautiful ways in which God has been at work. He has strengthened the leadership and effectiveness of the Romanian and Moldovan nationals serving with FGCI. We have continued to be prayerfully, financially and emotionally sustained and uplifted so graciously and generously by our dedicated supporters. And, God has provided new staff members to aptly fill positions of service in our ministry overseas AND here in the States at our Camp of the Good Shepherd.

One of the most recent additions to our Romanian staff is Mihai Pungila, the new president of *Fundatia FGCI*, who has taken Nootsie's role of leadership. I believe that God sent this exciting, dedicated young man to serve the Lord with us! Prior to the spring of 2021, we had never even met him. Mihai met Nootsie via a missions team experience with a group of local Christian workers he had gathered to do a service project at our Lida House in Babadag, Romania. Praise God for his divine appointments! We are expecting a visit from Mihai to the States in mid-February of this year. Even as a young man, Mihai has already proven his leadership ability. I believe that God has some wonderful plans for FGCI's ministry to children and families in Romania under Mihai's direction.

## FGCI's 2021 Income-Expense Summary Snapshot

Income	Expenses
Romania / Moldova Ministry - \$21,583	Romania / Moldova Ministry - \$113,974
Camp of the Good Shepherd - \$59,243	Camp of the Good Shepherd - \$69,181
*General & Desig. USA Staff - \$351,252	USA Home Office / Staff / Misc. - \$205,817
Missions Teams - \$-0-	No Missions Teams in 2021 due to Covid
<b>Total Income 2021: \$432,078*</b>	<b>Total Expenses 2021: \$388,972</b>

\*Does not include \$81,999 carried forward from 2020.

Our Sunshine (Therapy) Room (*Camera Raze Soarelui*) ministry continues happily and effectively with our staff member Nicoleta Breazu (joining FGCI in February 2020) leading. She really is a “ray of sunshine” for the adults with special needs whom she serves daily in the Sunshine Room. God is using Nicoleta to bring His light into the residents’ otherwise dark world. Praise God for His loving care!

Another great addition to our staff on February 1, 2021 was new Camp of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Programs Director Blake Stockman. Blake’s love for the Lord and his desire to help CGS grow in its effectiveness and expansion of ministry opportunities is a big boon to our camp’s development as a powerful tool for evangelism, discipleship and ministry training. Blake is now preparing for his second season of summer Bible camps at Camp of the Good Shepherd.

After nearly two years of not being able to travel to Romania, I was able to finally get there in late September of 2021. Praise God! I was also able to return to Romania AND Moldova in early December! How thrilling to be there with the precious children we serve. They changed so much after two years! While in Romania and Moldova, our FGCI staff and I led several Christ-centered Christmas programs proclaiming the Good News of Jesus. Our houseparents and ministry directors in Moldova, Vlad and Carolina Pogor, have “knocked it out of the park” by their wonderful Christian foster parenting in our Home of the Good Shepherd. Praise God! After more than a year and a half I got to meet our newest addition to the Home of the Good Shepherd family, a smart and sweet nine-year-old girl named Zinaida (Zina). I enjoyed a delightful week of time with our kids at the Home of the Good Shepherd, and was blessed to preach at the Roma (Gypsy) church in Vulcanesti, to visit our Roma friends, and to meet several people whom Vlad and Carolina have led to the Lord over the past couple of years. Praise God! How encouraging and invigorating! We are hoping to take missions teams over to Romania and Moldova again in the summer and fall of 2022.

In 2020, we were prevented from holding summer Bible camps at our Camp of the Good Shepherd near Louisville, Nebraska. But, in 2021, we opened up our Bible camp facility for a full program of summer Bible camps! Though we were only at two-thirds of our normal attendance, we believe it was a FANTASTIC summer of ministry with 13 baptisms and lots of other decisions for Christ! We are looking forward to our 2022 Summer Bible Camps season. This year’s theme is: BRAVE FAITH. It is based on 1 Corinthians 16:13 (NIV): “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.” A fitting theme for our times. During 2020 and 2021 we also had time to do several much-needed work projects at the campgrounds.

Currently, in Romania and Moldova, we are in the middle of our first project to collect items from Romanian Christians to give to Moldovan Christians in need. Our “Boots For Moldova” (*“Incaltaminte Pentru Moldova”*) project is an opportunity for

Romanians to share their blessings with their needy Christian brothers and sisters in Moldova. We have never tried a program like this before, but it’s been terrific to see the generosity of our Romanian brothers and sisters in Christ as they rise to the occasion of helping to provide winter footwear for their needy Christian brothers and sisters in Moldova. Throughout the month of January, our Romanian workers have been collecting used and new boots and winter shoes from churches in Romania. Soon, these boots and shoes will be transported to Moldova for distribution to hundreds of children and adults in need. Praise the Lord!

When you operate an overseas mission and you’re not able to travel overseas, it can be very disappointing, troubling and frustrating. We praise God that, through all of the pandemic shutdowns, travel restrictions, illness and sorrow, we’ve seen God at work in dynamic ways. You just cannot stop the spread of the Gospel! God has been revealing to us His grace and mercy in these troubled times. Jesus told us, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me” (John 14:1/NIV). My trust in the Lord has been strengthened *greatly* through the past two years. Even through loss—so many of our dear friends have died during the pandemic—it’s clear that God continues to “do His work” in this world. We are so blessed to be part of God’s team to take hope, dignity and love to His hurting kids in Jesus’ name.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for joining us in this important work!

Love in Jesus,



Joel Burkum, FGCI Executive Director

*FGCI is a 501 (c)(3) Non-Profit ministry (Fed. ID#42-1448176) based in Council Bluffs, IA. FGCI serves children in Romania and Moldova, and at our Camp of the Good Shepherd here in the States (including Lakota children). In Romania and Moldova we also serve adults with special needs, and work among Roma (Gypsy) children and adults.*