



**For God's Children
INTERNATIONAL**

a personal note

from **joel burkum**
FGCI Executive Director

Joel and a boy from one of the centers FGCI serves in Romania.

November 15, 2023

"A sower went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5a/KJV).

"It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose" (1 Cor. 3:7,8a/NLT).

"It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice" (Phil. 1:15, 18a/NIV).

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:6,7/NIV).

"He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love" (Eph. 4:16/NLT).

None of us can do it alone. If we are going to be effective in our service, it will require prayer, unity and a concerted effort by each one of us doing his or her part to help lost and hurting people find their anchor of faith and secure that anchor to the Solid Rock, Jesus Christ.

I thank YOU, our faithful and generous partner(s), for joining with us in this humble-but-important work to preach Christ and to provide hope, dignity and love in Jesus' name to God's hurting children. I cannot thank God nearly enough for the blessings He has poured out on us at For God's Children International over the years through wonderful partners like you doing your part to help us serve God's kids! Thank you for your prayers and financial support.



Our FGCI team led Bible Day Camps at centers in Eastern Romania in August.

We have seen God work in so many wonderful ways over the past few challenging years as we continue to serve in Romania, Moldova, the USA and, most recently, Ukraine. The Russia-Ukraine War has been a source of tremendous sadness, loss and danger for millions. [And who knows what problems will surface due to the fighting in Israel!] But through this crisis, we have seen many come to know Christ and the power of God's love and grace. God uses the worst things to bring about the best.

Throughout the past two years, we have been inundated with many new challenges and ministry responsibilities, but it has caused me and our staff to pray a lot and to depend on God's wisdom and guidance.

Help! An Urgent Call for FGCI Workers

FGCI is at a pivotal point in our ministry. We currently lack the necessary staff members to do all of the work that lies before us if we are going to be effective and productive in all areas of our ministry. I want to be perfectly transparent with you: **I NEED HELP! FGCI NEEDS HELP!**

We are issuing a call for workers to serve with FGCI and in Eastern Europe. We know that God will provide for our needs according to His will. We are praying for God's provision as we put out this call for more workers. Maybe God is calling YOU to serve with us at FGCI.

Here is a bulleted list of job positions (see brief job descriptions of each on the insert) for which we are seeking candidates. For more information, please contact me (jburkum@fgci.org) at FGCI.

- **FGCI Associate Director** (full-time)
- **FGCI Business Manager** (full-time or part-time)
- **FGCI Assistant Bookkeeper** (part-time)
- **Missionary to Eastern Europe** (full-time)
- **Camp of the Good Shepherd Programs Director** (full-time or part-time)
- **Houseparents at Home of the Good Shepherd** in Nisporeni, Moldova ((full-time)
- **Sunshine Room** (Zebil, Romania) **Administrator** (full-time)



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On a recent trip to take relief supplies into dangerous zones in Ukraine, FGCI friend and volunteer Pastor Vadim Sorochin shows the devastation the war has caused.

In Times Like These

Lyrics by Ruth Caye Jones

In times like these, you need a Savior
In times like these, you need an anchor;
Be very sure...be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock!
This Rock is Jesus, Yes, He's the One
This Rock is Jesus, the only One.
Be very sure...be very sure your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock.

Dear Friends,

As I write this *Personal Note*, the entire world seems to be in a storm of uncertainty and danger. But, even in the storm, we are confident that God can save us and that He will supply all of our needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19). Trusting Jesus is STILL the only remedy for the problems in this world today. How we need to pray for and to become God's agents of love, joy, hope and peace!

The Bible says it clearly: *We believers in Christ are in this ministry together!* We're not in competition with anyone except our enemy the devil.

TEAM NAVODARI '98



FGCI Board chairman Bob Walter (second from right) led an early FGCI Missions Team to serve at a center for infants and toddlers in Romania.

FGCI Missions Trips being organized for 2024

The pandemic put a damper on our summer missions trips for a few years, but now we're back! We are excited to get our FGCI Summer Missions Teams program back up and running. We have scheduled trips for **March 15-28 (2024)** and **July 15-30 (2024)**. The March team will consist of a split group: half doing construction work for homes of Roma families; half serving with Ukrainian refugees (moms and their kids). The July team will be serving in Bible camps for our kids in Moldova and Romania. We'd love to have you consider joining us for a life-changing experience (for both YOU and the children you will serve!). If you are interested in joining us, please contact me (Joel Burkum) at jburkum@fgci.org. You may also go online at www.fgci.org and download, complete and return an FGCI missions trip application.



2022 FGCI Summer Camps team to Romania.



2023 CGS Junior Camp kids and leaders get silly for one last group shot.

Camp of the Good Shepherd update

We experienced another wonderful season of graded Summer Bible Camps at our Camp of the Good Shepherd (Louisville, NE) in June and July thanks to our amazing team of leaders and a great set of campers! We were blessed to have volunteer Deans from Kingsway Christian Church (Omaha), Southside Christian Church (Council Bluffs), and Northwest Christian Church (Council Bluffs). Many 'thank you's' go out to Becky Gomez, Casey & Gail BeDunnah, Stacy Haynes, Bryan Stigall, and Jeff & Alicia Kraft, for their dedicated leadership in deaning our graded Bible camps. Thank you, also, CGS staff, Interns, Sheepdogs and volunteer support staff for your tireless help at each session of camp this summer. You all contributed much to making our program a success!

Our 2023 Summer Bible Camps season (Theme: "Thirsty for God") ended on a very high note with the baptism of one of our long-time attending campers (Alana). Many serious, life-altering decisions for Christ were made by campers again this summer. What a privilege to share in these young people's lives, and to witness their personal decisions for Christ made public. We have set our theme for next year's camp season. It's: "Be the Change" [based on Eph. 2:10: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (NIV).] We have also established the schedule (find the schedule online at **cgs.camp**) and have begun looking for leaders. We are seeing a hopeful trend among young people to desire authentic faith and worship based simply on the Word of God. We pray for God to lift up this new generation of believers and Christian leaders.

In addition to our regular graded Bible camp offerings, this year we sponsored a Women's Retreat in April, and a Men's Retreat ("FORGE") in October. Thanks to Nancy Jones and Kristin McInnis (Women's Retreat) and Brian Montieth (FORGE) for their leadership of these programs. We hope to offer more camp opportunities next year.

Besides camp events sponsored by FGCI/CGS, we were happy to see our campgrounds used by many Christian groups for their own programs virtually every week of the summer break into the fall. Camp of the Good Shepherd would make a good place for you to hold your event for groups of 12 to 120. Contact CGS Office Manager and Reservations Specialist, Gail BeDunnah (gail@fgci.org), if you are interested in reserving Camp of the Good Shepherd for your event next year. Hurry, because weekends are going fast!

We continue to make upgrades and improvements to our campgrounds, thanks to the efforts of our great staff and the great





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Top: Our friend, John Buchanan (of Lincoln, NE), prepares stained-glass windows for the entry doors to the CGS Little Cedars Lodge.

Bottom: Valley Christian Church (Lakeville, MN) work team installs new entry doors for the CGS Girls Dorm building.

volunteer teams coming to serve at CGS. We are thankful for each group of volunteers who come to help us. This year, we have had some really productive teams of volunteers, including a team from Christian Fellowship Church (Mound City, MO) and a team from Valley Christian Church (Lakeville, MN). We have also had work teams serve at camp while having their own retreat at CGS. It has been a BIG blessing for us. Let us know if you might have a team of workers available to volunteer at camp in the coming months. We always have a variety of projects in need of

attention. We are hopeful to start a project next year to construct an addition to our camp chapel (just to the north) that will include bathrooms, a kitchenette and a group meeting room.

As I mentioned earlier, we are seeking a **CGS Programs Director** to serve in a full- or part-time position effective immediately. Please pray.

Romania, Moldova & Ukraine summer ministry recap

I hit the ground running when I arrived in Romania on July 23rd, traveling immediately to Moldova with Vlad Pogor (FGCI's Moldova-based ministry representative) to help lead our annual Bible camp in Carpineni.



Vlad Pogor (in blue T-shirt) gets camp going with a fun "ice breaker" game. This year's camp attendance was just over 100 campers and staff, including Moldovans, Roma (Gypsies), Ukrainian refugees, and one American. :)

Vlad and his wife Carolina did a wonderful job organizing our 6-day camp for more than 100 of us campers and staff. Our theme was "I Need Jesus/ Am nevoie de Dumnezeu." Wow! It was a thrilling experience! We were blessed with around 30 Roma (Gypsy) friends, 50 Ukrainian refugees, and 20 kids and family members from Nisporeni, where we have our Home of the Good Shepherd and Ministry Center. It was a blast bringing all of these fine people together. We were speaking Romanian, Russian, Romany (Gypsy), Ukrainian and...English. [Thanks, interpreters!] I am amazed how God allowed us to have such a powerful time of praise, fel-



Ukrainian refugee women get together during camp for uplifting fellowship, Bible study and much-needed encouragement.

lowship, prayer, worship, preaching and teaching even with the challenges of language. God's Spirit was clearly present as we opened the Bible and let the Word of God flow through music and the spoken word.

I was so blessed to have the opportunity to preach and teach multiple times in Romanian. I've been pushing myself to learn and speak Romanian more intentionally over the past two years. And, though I might still sound like a five-year-old when I speak in Romanian, it was wonderful to be able to communicate without an interpreter (except for the Holy Spirit) and to speak directly to my dear friends while looking them in the eye, providing a much more personal experience. Praise God!

Even with such a diverse group at camp, we saw wonderful comradery, patience and love demonstrated throughout this exciting week together. For many of our Ukrainian refugee moms and children, it was their first-ever Bible camp experience (or Christian event, period!). Many spiritual seeds were planted and watered during the week. Many tear-filled and life-changing decisions were made for Christ during the week, including many baptisms that took place after the camp finished.

One of my highlights during the camp in Carpineni was being there to witness the preaching of a fine sermon by one of our dear Roma (Gypsy) friends, Ruslan. Since Ruslan was just a small boy, he has been faithfully coming to our FGCI-led summer Bible day camps and overnight camps in Moldova. He has been a regular attendee at the church in Vulcanesti. Now, Ruslan is a man. A few years ago, God touched Ruslan's heart and Ruslan put his trust in Jesus and was baptized. Now, Ruslan is one of the young Christian leaders in the church in Vulcanesti. Praise God!



Top: Vlad Pogor and Roma youth dramatize the Parable of the Lost Son. **Middle:** Ukrainian refugee children enjoy speaking and playing together. **Bottom:** Ruslan (right) and Simona are newlyweds. They love Jesus and are deeply involved in ministry. Ruslan preached during FGCI's camp in Carpineni, Moldova, this summer.



Above: Joel enjoys some fellowship time at camp with teens from Nisporeni and Vulcanesti, Moldova. **Left:** This summer, FGCI sponsored our largest camp in Moldova ever. Our group included a diverse group of Moldovans, Roma and Ukrainian refugees.



We rejoice with Marcela (left) and David (right) of Vulcanesti, who were baptized into Christ in early September.

In April of this year, Ruslan married a dear Christian girl. I am confident that God has some wonderful plans for using Ruslan and Simona in His Kingdom work.

We were delighted to hear that seven of the Roma campers (young people we've befriended and taught for years and years) who attended camp in Carpineni were baptized in Vulcanesti in early September. We are thankful for the church and the Christian leaders in Vulcanesti who have planted, watered and harvested souls in partnership with FGCI and other Christian groups serving in the area. Yes, we are in this ministry together (1 Cor. 3:8). God is at work in the hearts of the Roma people!

Several of these families and youth joined us for Bible camp this summer. God is so good.

Home Improvements for our Roma friends

While we were in camp in Carpineni (Moldova) this summer, I learned of a housing issue facing one of our dear Roma campers. Radic is a strong believer in Jesus. He has some special needs. He lives with and cares for his father and aunt (who also has special needs) in a small Roma village in Moldova. Though I've known and loved Radic for years, I've never visited his home. I found out that his house is badly in need of much structural attention and weatherizing (as are many other homes for Roma widows and poor families). So, we at FGCI are planning to help make Radic's house safer, more comfortable and more structurally sound. In March 2024, we are scheduled to take a team to repair/reconstruct Radic's home. If you would like to help with funds to repair Radic's House, or would like to join our construction team heading to Moldova, March 15-28, please contact me (jburkum@fgci.org) for more information. Include a note with your check that mentions: "Radic's House Project."



FGCI is scheduling a team to travel to Moldova in March 2024 to make needed improvements on Radic's home.



Our Home of the Good Shepherd family (pictured above—with a few extra friends) in Nisporeni, Moldova, continues to do well. Though we face the normal challenges of raising children, we see God at work in the precious lives of our kids: Veronica, Roma, Vlada, Diana, Ruslan, Zina and Antonela. We are blessed to have Vlad and Carolina Pogor, and Vlad's mother Silvia serving our kids so well and preparing them for a bright future in Christ. We are seeking more houseparents to serve in Moldova as Christian foster parents.

In addition to all of their other duties, Vlad and Carolina have been doing a wonderful job at bringing several youth and families from Nisporeni together for evangelism, Bible study and fellowship in our new worship center at Home of the Good Shepherd. For many of these children and families, attending any kind of "church service" has been rare or nonexistent. Now, there is a place where these often-marginalized people can worship God and be discipled.

Thank you so much for your investment of time, prayer and dollars in the ministry of FGCI. Please take a look at the special insert with this *Personal Note* ministry update. It has important information about our continuing ministry to serve Ukrainians victimized by the Russia-Ukraine War, including *great* news we have received during the past two days!

Love in Jesus,

Joel Burkum

brother joel



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You may donate online by visiting www.fgci.org



Vadim Sorochin recently took a load of food and necessities to areas in Ukraine where missiles continue to fly. He frequently puts himself at risk on behalf of the suffering Ukrainian people. It is an honor for FGCI to partner in ministry with Vadim and his cohorts who endanger their lives in Jesus' name for the sake of God's hurting children in Ukraine.

Ukraine Relief continues into another year

When the Russia-Ukraine War broke out to our surprise on February 24, 2022, we had no idea it would persist this long. After more than 20 months of continual missile attacks, destruction and fighting in Ukraine, the war drags on at a virtual stalemate. But, we believe that we must continue to help the victims of this conflict.

Praise God! We have received several designated gifts to help us meet the urgent needs of thousands of affected Ukrainians over the course of the War. [We continue to need designated support for this ministry.] Our faithful support base (and that's you!) along with some generous grants from International Disaster Emergency Service (IDES)—including one that was just approved today! Praise God!!!—have allowed us to continue our efforts to bring hope and help to these hurting people who have escaped Ukraine as refugees, or who are stranded in dangerous places inside Ukraine.



These are Ukrainian children that FGCI has been serving since shortly after the outbreak of the War on February 24, 2022. We are very thankful for Vlad, our generous FGCI partners and our good friends at IDES.

Now, as we enter the cold season of the year (and it gets very cold in Ukraine in the winter), the refugees we serve (in Moldova) and the folks sheltering in place in Ukraine are concerned about how they will stay warm, have enough food and water to last through these cold months, and how they will procure clothing, coats and footwear to keep them protected from the harsh weather. These fears are compounded by the very real dangers of random missile fire regularly occurring in many areas of Ukraine.

Here is the most recent report (received on Nov. 8) that we received from our ministry partner, Vadim Sorochin (via our FGCI representative Vlad Pogor) regarding our on-going Ukrainian War Victim relief service. Vlad writes: "Hello brother Joel. I want to share the wonderful report from Vadim on the trip he had to the dangerous regions [of Ukraine] Zaporozhye, Kherson, Orehov and others. In total, more than 250 people were helped with food products, medicines, Bibles, water and other things necessary for survival. Vadim and his team greatly encouraged those people through spiritual and material means. Vadim told me that while he was distributing food, a rocket flew about 500 meters away. It was very dangerous and scary, but everything was fine. People were grateful to the point of tears. The people said: 'We thought that we had been forgotten, but now we see that God has not forgotten us.' Vadim writes: 'On this trip we bought food, medicine and water. People were very grateful and blessed by these necessary things. We weren't able to purchase wood or mattresses for the people, because there were a lot more people than we had planned for, and we didn't have enough money to buy [these things]!' Vadim also says, 'Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your involvement in helping the Ukrainian people.'"



Dear friend of FGCI, would you please consider a special, designated gift to help us purchase food/water, clothing/coats, mattresses/sleeping bags/blankets, firewood/heating fuel and medication for Ukrainians this fall, winter and spring? [Please indicate with a note attached to your gift.]

GREAT NEWS FLASH!!

Vadim Sorochin has been working tirelessly and driving his own vehicle for nearly two years to take donated relief items to Ukrainians in danger zones in Ukraine. Just yesterday we received fantastic news that some generous donors have supplied funds to help Vadim secure a good, used van



to use for delivering relief supplies and food to Ukrainians! Our good friend, Dave Nonnemacher of New Horizons Romania ministry (Two Harbors, MN), knew of Vadim's need for a good, dependable vehicle for delivering relief goods to replace the old, unreliable van that Vadim had been using the past two years. After many prayers and a few phone calls, God provided the funds (via Dave's contacts) necessary to secure a very nice, 4x4 van for Vadim. We (FGCI) will help facilitate this purchase. **We are in this ministry together!**



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HELP WANTED:

For God's Children International (FGCI) is praying for and actively seeking employees to serve in our Christian organization that serves institutionalized, abandoned, at-risk and marginalized children in Romania, Moldova and, recently, Ukraine. FGCI also serves adults with special challenges. FGCI owns Camp of the Good Shepherd (a Christian camp and retreat facility in Louisville, Nebraska). We have several positions that are available at this time. Please read the brief descriptions of each job below. Contact us if you feel that God may be calling you (or someone you know) to serve with us.

Contact fgci@fgci.org/712-328-3776 (office) with inquiries, or if you need clarification about a particular position. Or, contact Joel Burkum at jburkum@fgci.org.

FGCI Associate Director (a full-time position). This job involves working across the entire spectrum of FGCI's ministry: with staff members, missions teams, ministry programs, children and adults being served, and in dealing with FGCI's financial and legal decisions and fundraising efforts, and accountability and communications with constituents. The FGCI Associate Director should be able and available to preach and teach from the Word of God, to travel overseas (and locally) to support, lead and promote the work of FGCI. The FGCI Associate Director will work closely with FGCI Executive Director Joel Burkum, and will be training to eventually assume the role of Executive Director of For God's Children International upon Joel's retirement.

FGCI Business Manager (a full-time or part-time position). The FGCI Business Manager job mainly consists in dealing with the financial affairs of FGCI's various ministries. The FGCI Business Manager should be familiar with accounting practices, budgeting, preparing financial reports, QuickBooks (the accounting program FGCI uses) online. The job involves dealing with constituents, banks, wire transfers, spreadsheets, income/expense issues, paying bills, etc. This position will also require work with FGCI's international staff, grant requests and accounting requirements, online donations and bill paying.

Assistant Bookkeeper (a part-time position). The part-time bookkeeper will be responsible to complement the work of FGCI's current Bookkeeper (Greg Carpenter) who will be working from overseas for the next several months. The Bookkeeper should have a knowledge of QuickBooks online, general bookkeeping practices, use of computers and preparing financial reports.

Missionary to Eastern Europe (a full-time position). FGCI would like to have an American couple to serve as missionaries to Eastern Europe (Romania/Moldova/Ukraine). The Missionary family would serve as Liaison between FGCI's Stateside staff and board of directors, and Eastern European FGCI staff, volunteers and government agencies. The Missionary family will work with FGCI missions team members and interns coming from the USA to serve in FGCI's diverse ministry sites in Eastern Europe. The Missionary family would also do Christian service in the local area where they would be serving (Romania, Moldova or Ukraine). The Missionary family would be responsible to raise financial support.

CGS Programs Director (a full-time or part-time position). We are seeking a person to oversee all of the programming, staffing (paid and volunteer), promotion and usage of Camp of the Good Shepherd (in Louisville, NE). The CGS Programs Director should be able and willing to preach and teach, and to promote CGS. The CGS Programs director should understand and be able to share the vision of Camp of the Good Shepherd. They should have the talents and abilities necessary to create and lead programs, fundraise, write grant proposals, create and choose curriculum, and inspire children and adults alike to use Camp of the Good Shepherd.

Workers needed in Romania, Moldova and Ukraine:

Houseparents for Home of the Good Shepherd (full-time position). We are seeking a couple to serve as houseparents ("Dad" and "Mom") for our Christian foster home in Nisporeni, Moldova (in western Moldova). Home of the Good Shepherd has been in existence for more than two decades. Currently, Home of the Good Shepherd has seven children in its care. Houseparents will need to speak Romanian fluently and have a deep love for children who have experienced tragedy or trauma.

Sunshine Room (for adults in need of occupational and/or physical therapy) **Worker** (full-time position). FGCI has worked in Zebil, Romania, for more than two decades, as we have served among boys with special needs, and with adults (18 years of age and older) with special needs or disabilities. For several years, we have worked with the Romanian government to provide care and therapy in our Sunshine Room (Camera Raze Soarelui) in the government center there. We have employed several local workers (Romanian) from the area, but have never been able to place a trained Occupational Therapist to work with adults with special needs. Currently, we are in the middle of renewing our contract with the government, and we are seeking certified occupational therapists to serve in the Sunshine Room. We would love to send workers from the States to serve in Zebil.