



For God's Children
INTERNATIONAL

a personal note

from *joel burkum*
FGCI Executive Director

July 19, 2022

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19 BSB).

Dear Friends,

Once again, I'm writing to you under the pressure of limited time, as I'm scheduled to fly to Romania in just a few precious hours. So, I'm going to have to make this message brief, in order to have time to finish prepping for my trip. I would ask you to pray for our first missions team preparing to



CGS Junior campers run the obstacle course.

travel to Romania since the pandemic hit us in 2020. Our group will be heading over a few days after I leave.

Also, I wanted to let you know that we just wrapped up another wonderful season of Bible camps at our

Camp of the Good Shepherd in Louisville, Nebraska. We had some great Bible camp sessions, including our largest-ever Junior High attendance. Praise the Lord!

How can I begin to tell you everything that has transpired since last I wrote a "Personal Note" FGCI update back in March! The past three months have been an overwhelming series of experiences and opportunities that have pushed our entire ministry to trust in God's wisdom, strength and provision in new, astounding ways.

After a tough year of losses and changes in our ministry staff in 2021, we started off 2022 with a new Romanian director (Mihai Pungila) and in a new direction of ministry with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. The idea that we would be serving Ukrainian refugees was nowhere on our radar at the time the war began on February 24 this year. But God had us strategically placed "for such a time as this," as we were positioned to be of great assistance to Ukrainian refugees fleeing into Romania and Moldova by the tens of thousands in March and April.

Our FGCI-Romania (Mihai and Magda Pungila) and FGCI-Moldova (Vlad and Carolina Pogor) represent

tatives jumped wholeheartedly into the ministry of urgent care for Ukrainians fleeing their country, as well as Ukrainians displaced by the war but stuck inside Ukraine. Mihai and Magda went to work helping at the Isaccea, Romania, border crossing on the Danube River. Mihai and Magda found a food trailer and began serving hot food and drinks to weary refugees crossing the Danube into Romania from Ukraine. The Pungilas also opened up their home and the church building near their home in Tulcea (Romania) to welcome refugees, providing the love of Jesus to every person coming to their gate or calling in need of shelter or assistance at any and all hours of the day.



FGCI's Hot Dog stands serves hundreds of free hot dogs daily to refugees.



Magda Pungila (hand on boy's shoulder) stands with a group of Ukrainian refugees helped by FGCI and sheltering in a generous host's motel in Romania.

In Moldova, Vlad and Carolina provided shelter for groups of refugees at our Home of the Good Shepherd. For weeks, Vlad drove 700 miles a day providing rides to hundreds of refugees from the border crossings of Ukraine and Moldova into safe lodging in Chisinau, the Capital of Moldova. Vlad and Carolina helped to provide long-term care for a Ukrainian orphanage worker and nine children she safely escorted out of Ukraine during a morning of Russian bombings near the facility where she worked. For the past few months, the Pogors have been investing much time, energy, love and the message of hope in Christ into the lives of these precious kids and their "Tanti" (Auntie) Zina. Currently, we are in the process of finishing up work on our new Home of the Good Shepherd Ministry Center in Nisporeni, Moldova. Soon, we will be able to host refugees in this center. Thanks to you from Kingsway Christian Church, Logan Christian Church and Capitol City Christian Church for helping us raise the final dollars needed to complete the furnishings of the ministry center.

Ukrainian refugees crossed into Romania and Moldova by the thousands in March and April.



Vlad (left) and Carolina (right) Pogor visit a home of Ukrainian orphans who fled from Ukraine and are living in Moldova. FGCI has provided much support for these orphan children.

In Ukraine, Mihai and Vlad have been working with pastors to move thousands upon thousands of pounds of food, water, medicine, personal necessities and hope into villages and cities in Ukraine filled with refugees and citizens of Ukraine who have been hiding in their cellars for months on end, as bombings and gunfire continue above. Many of these pastors have risked their lives to help needy Ukrainians by traveling into areas of Ukraine where there is much Russian missile fire and the threat of Russian army activity. I have received many sad and disturbing videos and photos that reveal the utter devastation that is happening in Ukraine, and which validate the claims of the death and destruction that has become a daily event in this war-ravaged country. In one particularly emotional video, our friend Vadim was weeping as he showed a bombed apartment complex behind him and said, "the stench of death is so strong here that I can hardly bear it." In that location, 200 lives were lost in the apartment complex and no one had been able to retrieve and bury the corpses.

Not far into Ukraine from Romania's Isaccea border crossing, I had an opportunity in late March to visit the Ukrainian city of Kiliya. Here I met a pastor named Andrei who has been helping hundreds of displaced Ukrainians who have fled to his city to escape the dangers of south and southeast Ukraine. At Mihai's request, we (FGCI) gave Andrei our Mercedes ministry van from Romania, so that Andrei could use it for delivering food and supplies to refugees, as well as giving them rides to safety.

We have seen a tremendous response from our supporters and many concerned friends and organizations to the needs of the refugees and citizens of Ukraine during this crisis. Many individuals, churches and organizations have sent generous gifts and grants to help FGCI serve Ukrainians. We are very grateful to our dear ministry partners at IDES (International Disaster Emergency Services) of Noblesville, Indiana. For the past three months, IDES has helped us with several large monetary grants enabling us to serve Ukrainians with food, supplies, medication, personal needs, blankets and beds, rides to safety, provisions for lodging, and fuel for vehicles delivering goods to needy Ukrainians. One of our first big projects was providing food for our Hot Dog stand at the Isaccea, Romania, border crossing, where we have been serving free hot dogs, hot soup, coffee, tea, snacks and cold drinks to thousands of refugees crossing into Romania. Some days, we have served up to 1,000 hot dogs to very grateful refugees seeking comfort during these difficult times. We have also been able to share Bibles and words of Christian comfort. Thank you so much, dear friends at IDES!

As time goes by, we're continuing our efforts to help Ukrainians get through these hard times, by regular visits and food distribution on a monthly basis. There have been several refugees who have come to know Christ as Savior through the messages of hope they have received from our staff and volunteers taking food to cities and villages throughout Ukraine,

Romania and Moldova. Near Kyiv, pastor Vadim has helped to start several "prayer groups" of people who come to get food, but who stay to pray and hear the Word of God preached. Praise God!

Sadly, we hear of the continual threat of starvation and danger from missile fire in the areas where we are serving in Ukraine. It has been amazing to see pictures of the long lines of folks forming at our food distribution sites. Seeing an elderly person caress or kiss a loaf of bread is heartbreaking. We are praying for an end to this war as soon as possible. We have heard reports that Russia has been targeting bakeries and food production facilities in an attempt to "starve out" the people of Ukraine. In response to this, one of our new partners, Orphan Grain Train (OGT) of Norfolk, Nebraska (my home town!), has been working with FGCI and a Ukrainian ministry, Tavriski Christian Institute (TCI) of Kherson, to get 24 tons of flour into Ukraine to help feed hungry Ukrainians. As of this week, we have completed most of the preparations for the purchase and delivery of this flour. Mihai will be distributing 12 tons of flour through our partners in southwest Ukraine. TCI will be distributing 12 tons of flour to needy Ukrainians in the areas where they serve. Yes, God is opening doors for us to reach into Ukraine with His hands of mercy. We are grateful for our new partners in service and ministry, and we look forward to many more collaborations in the weeks, months, years to come!

Please continue to pray for the people of Ukraine who are suffering tremendous grief and passing through a valley of the shadow of death in their country. We don't know how long this war will continue or what the outcome will be, but we do know that we serve an amazing and ALMIGHTY God who can deliver anyone at any time at His word. We can also pray for and help the victims of war. We are thankful to you who have partnered with us at FGCI to serve Ukraine during this critical time of need. Please continue to help us help the people of Ukraine.

I am exhausted, but God is good. He is providing the resources and strength we need to endure and be victorious in these difficult times. While I was in Ukraine in April, I had the chance to meet Diana, a sweet, Christian young woman living in Cernauti. She and her husband have provided lodging for more than 15 adults and children—refugees who have left their homes in the dangerous areas of Kyiv and Mariupol to find safe shelter in western Ukraine. This young lady's father and brother are valiantly fighting for freedom as they serve in a volunteer militia which they are self-funding. Diana sent me this message with which I'd like to end my letter: "Thank you for your heart and your support. Sometimes we feel ourselves tired, but it's not a good time for rest."

I share Diana's sentiments. We thank you for your encouragement and support as we seek to help as many hurting Ukrainians as possible. May God bless you for your partnership! I look forward to sharing more details with you soon.

Love in Jesus,

Joel Burkum
brother joel



Delivering food packets.



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