



For God's Children
INTERNATIONAL

a personal note

from joel burkum

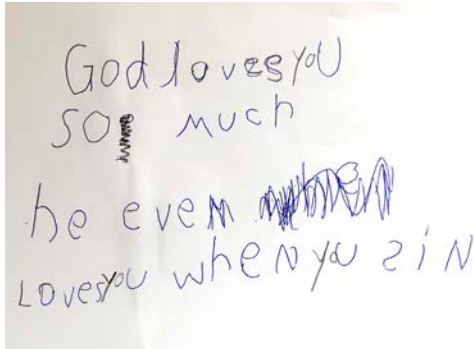
FGCI Executive Director

December 10, 2020

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
—John 3:16 (KJV)*

Dear Friends,

After my son Graham's family gathered for their first Advent reading this season, my six-year-old grandson Rockwell wrote down this heartfelt truth in his own words: "God loves you so much. He even loves you when you sin." Wow! Well said, Rockwell! [Brings tears to this grandpa's eyes just thinking of Rockwell saying that in his sweet, sincere voice.]



John 3:16, the "Golden Verse of the Bible," expresses this profound truth in mostly monosyllabic words that even a child can understand. The greatest gift to receive at Christmas is to understand that God loves you and that He sent His son Jesus down to earth to save you from your sins. Could there be a greater gift than that which brings love, peace, joy, purpose and eternal life?! This is our message this Christmas to the children and adults we are serving in Romania and Moldova: God loves you and He sent His son Jesus to bring you back home with Him.



Our Home of the Good Shepherd family in Nisporeni, Moldova, decorates for Christmas this year. Due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, we have been unable to travel to Moldova since last year at Christmastime.

This will be the first Christmas trip to Romania/Moldova that I have missed ever since we started making Christmas trips so many years ago. But, regardless of challenges and obstacles preventing our travel overseas, we're moving forward with plans to bless our kids with the message of the Good News of Jesus. Our theme this year is: "Love Came Down at Christmas" (based on John 3:16). Our local national FGCI staff members will be



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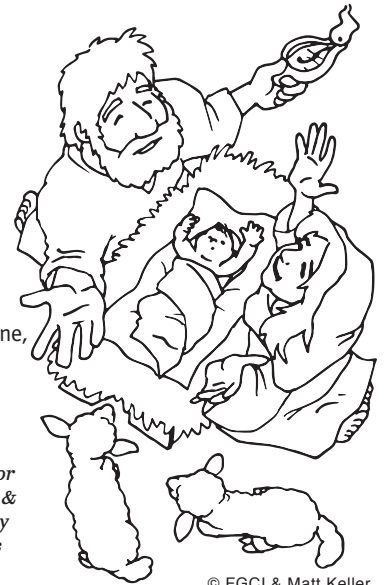
Love Came Down at Christmas

by Christina Rossetti (1885)

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine;
Worship we our Jesus,
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love shall be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.



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>>> Pictured to the right is one of Matt Keller's beautiful illustrations for this year's FGCI Christmas Coloring & Activity Book. If you would like a copy (or several copies), please contact us or look on our website for details.

celebrating the birth of Christ with our kids and distributing food, candy and gifts in whatever way we can get the job done. We're putting finishing touches on our 2020 Christmas devotional/coloring/activity booklet that will be printed in Romania and distributed to our kids.



Hello, I am Costel. Merry Christmas. Thank You for everything



Maleesha Mustion, our SponsorLink Ministry Assistant has put together a couple of terrific videos that have clips of our kids, staff and FGCI volunteers thanking our supporters and wishing everyone a Merry Christmas! I saw it for the first time today and it thrilled me to

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watch and listen to these heartwarming greetings. I can't believe how much our kids have grown and changed over the past year since I was last in Romania and Moldova! Oh, how I miss each one of them.

Two young people immersed into Christ

Our highest aim and greatest joy in ministry is to see our young people come to faith in Christ. Within the past few months, we were blessed with



Veronica (one of our Home of the Good Shepherd foster girls) prepares to be immersed into Christ following a church service in Nisporeni, Moldova.

the news that two of our special teenagers, Ruslan and Veronica, had made the decision to give their lives to Christ and were immersed into the name of Jesus. Ruslan is part of the Roma (Gypsy) Christian youth group we serve in Vulcanesti, Moldova. [See Ruslan (front row in blue jeans) in photo of Roma youth below.] We have known Ruslan and have worked with him for many years. Ruslan has been very active in serving and leading among our Roma youth in Vulcanesti. Veronica turned 18 this year. She is one of our foster kids in our Home of the Good Shepherd (HGS) in Nisporeni, Moldova. We have seen amazing changes in the lives of these kids. Veronica has grown dramatically in her faith over the six years she has lived in our Christian home. We anticipate with great joy how God will use Veronica and Ruslan in the coming years. Pray for them both.

Food packets help many needy families in Moldova & Romania



One of the most effective ways we've been able to reach out during the pandemic shutdowns has been through the purchase and distribution of emergency food packs for needy families and individuals. In Moldova, Vlad Pogor, FGCI's house dad in our Home of the Good Shep-

herd in Nisporeni, has been able to spread the love of Christ while seeing to the physical needs of many, many families in the Nisporeni/Vulcanesti, Moldova, area. Over the past several months, we have been sending money

Above: FGCI staff member Vlad Pogor (seated in back row) and a group of Roma youth from the church have delivered hundreds of food packets to needy families in Vulcanesti, Moldova.

Left: A grateful recipient of clothing, food and other necessary items provided by FGCI staff members in Eastern Romania.



(provided by FGCI **SponsorLink** partners and from FGCI's general budget) to purchase firewood and food packs of assorted staple foods and diapers or other specific family needs for dozens of families and individuals who have no way to purchase these necessary items. In the village of Vulcanesti (a Roma/Gypsy village) there are so many families with single parents, widows or folks with physical disabilities who simply have no means to get out and purchase food, firewood or medical supplies/medicine. Vlad has organized the Roma youth we work with from the local church to sort, pack and hand-deliver the food packs to homes. Each time the group delivers a food pack, they pray with the recipients and encourage them. For Christmas, we will be providing food packs for 70 families in the village of Vulcanesti.

In Romania, FGCI staff members Domnica ("Mama Nootsie") and Sergiu Ristea have been purchasing and delivering food stores which our worker Nicoleta has been taking to needy villagers in the Zebil area. We plan to continue food distributions through the winter months as funds allow.

Visits with supporting churches and individuals

Over the past few months, I have had the privilege to speak with several of our supporting churches and individuals face to face. What a blessing! Jeremy Befort and I met via a Zoom meeting with several of the members of the Valley Christian Church (Lakeville, MN) Missions Committee to share ministry updates and prayer with them. Thank you! A few weeks ago, I was in Primghar, Iowa, at the Church of Christ where our FGCI board member Harry Arrick is an elder. Primghar has been supporting FGCI for more than two decades. I had not visited there in person for at least 10 years, so it was great reconnecting with our brothers and sisters in Christ to share a ministry update.

On the Sunday after Thanksgiving, I presented a ministry update at Journey Christian Church (JCC) in Wayne, Nebraska. JCC is another longtime supporting church (more than 20 years) which I haven't visited in person for years and years. It was nice to see how the church had changed since my last visit, and even better to catch up with some of my old friends from my college days at NCC. Also, while I was there in Wayne, some of our longtime supporters (Scott and Mary Kay Hasemann) whom I had never met in person came by to say hello. We had a very nice visit! Now I have faces to put behind the names of these wonderful, generous supporters. I appreciate all of you who regularly pray for us and send money to support the ministry of FGCI. It's truly humbling and edifying to be able to partner together with you in our service for God's hurting kids.



FGCI longtime supporters Scott & Mary Kay Hasemann of Wayne, NE.

We are so very thankful to each one of you for helping us reach out to our kids (and adults with special needs) with the amazing Good News of God's love and grace that came down to us on that very first Christmas.

Merry Christmas! May God bless you as you celebrate the "wonders of His love." And may each one of us thank God for His bounteous blessings. We have so much for which to be thankful. God is so good (Psalm 100:5).

Love in Jesus,

Joel Burkum

brother joel



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You may donate online by visiting www.fgci.org!