



For God's Children  
INTERNATIONAL

## a personal note

from joel burkum  
Executive Director

Joel and FGCI-Romania President  
Domnica "Mama Nootsie" Ristea.

May 12, 2020

*"...The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose...  
we are co-workers in God's service" 1 Corinthians 3:8a,9b (NIV).*

Dear Friends,

When I wrote my last *Personal Note* (at the end of February), I suggested the idea of inaugurating an International "Reboot" Day which would occur every four years on February 29 as a time for us to shut down, eliminate the clutter of our lives, and to reset our direction. Wow!! I sure had no idea about what was going to transpire in the USA and around the world immediately following my article—in the form of an international pandemic shutdown! Having a break of a week or two may have been helpful. But, two, three, four or more months of shutdown?...maybe a bit excessive.

I do hope that you are healthy and that the Coronavirus has not had too much of a debilitating or devastating impact on your life or the lives of your loved ones. It's sure been scary and deadly for so many. May God keep you safe.

In the continuing wake of the pandemic, we have had to make a lot of difficult and creative decisions regarding our ministry. Praise God for you, our generous and faithful supporter(s), for remembering us during this strange, historic, unprecedented and uncertain time. We don't despair, because we know God has this covered. Let us pray for relief around the world. Let us pray that people turn their eyes upon Jesus—that they seek and find Him.

A few days ago, I had to make the tough call to cancel our graded Summer Bible camps program at our Camp of the Good Shepherd (due to Cass County guidelines for June and July overnight camps) near Louisville, Nebraska. We have plans to redeem this time by doing lots of work on our campus that we couldn't normally do during the summer camps season.

Right now, I would ask you pray for us as we wait to see if we will be able to take missions teams to Romania and Moldova to lead Bible camps and to visit our kids over there in July and August.

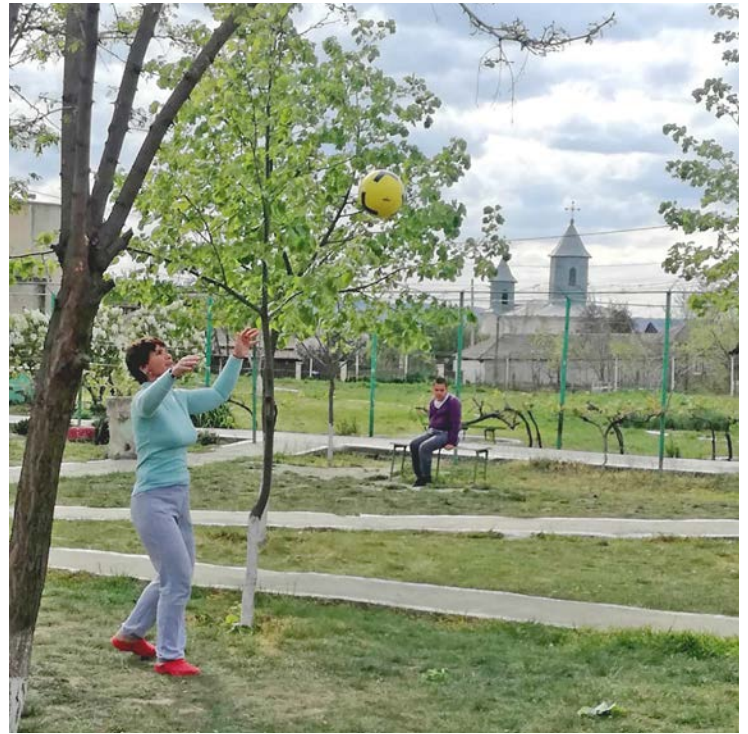
In Romania and Moldova we are doing our best during this Coronavirus shutdown to reach out to our kids, to poor families, and to adults with special challenges who are in need. This month, I've asked my dear sister in Christ, Nootsie Ristea (our FGCI-Romania president), to give us an update.



"Mama Nootsie" Ristea

*"Mama" Nootsie shares her heart about what is happening in Romania during the COVID-19 shutdown*

I don't know how you are facing this pandemic situation, but here it is pretty much...hard. We cannot leave our homes, and people older than 65 have a specific interval of going outside (2 hours per day, between 11:00-13:00). Most Romanians work from home. Schools, malls and restaurants are



*A resident at the Zebil center for adults with special challenges enjoys some time outside with a ball provided by FGCI sponsors.*

closed. The town is empty like never before. Now I feel like an assisted child from a *Casa de Copii* (government children's home/center) who needs permission to leave the house. :( Speaking about the centers, no volunteer is allowed to visit, and the workers take turns of 2-week shifts each. So, they cannot go home for 2 weeks. It is also hard for children who live in [government-funded] apartments. They say that they practice going up and down the [apartment building] stairs, so their feet won't hurt.

[Joel's note: Nootsie told Jeremy about what one of the directors for a children's center in Romania told her. Even though she lived right next door to the school, she has had to stay in the center for two weeks at a time, as an example for the other helpers. The director told Nootsie that it really helps her (and other staff members at the center) to understand how the children must feel being trapped in their centers everyday. This is one of the many unforeseen benefits of this "shelter in place" lockdown!]



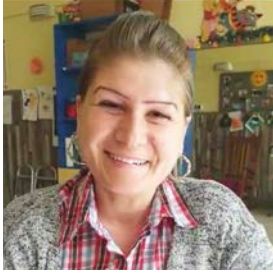
*At the Zebil center, adults with special needs are delighted to receive sports equipment to play with on the center grounds.*

For all children (including adults with special needs in the Zebil center) that have a playground in the courtyard, I purchased some sports articles (badminton, volleyball, soccer ball, etc.) from the Decathlon (sporting goods store), which delivered the equipment/games directly to the centers.

more >>>

The children (and adults with special needs) were tremendously happy and send you thousands of hugs and thank-yous, as through your donations you have made their isolated lives much easier to endure.

Also, the Romanian economy suffers a lot, as many lost their jobs, more are temporarily unemployed, and for all those who used to have a daily contract, they are starving...and I know this is happening worldwide. May God have mercy on us. This situation is much worse in Tulcea county (where FGCI works in many centers), so I decided to help the poor people there, so that they would have something to put on the table for Easter. We (FGCI) provided in the name of Jesus food for 2 families with 6 kids (each), a single mother with 3 kids, as well as a few elderly families in that area. Our worker from Zebil, Nicoleta Breazu, distributed the food (see photos below).



FGCI worker, Nicoleta.



Grateful recipients of food provided by FGCI during the Coronavirus shutdown.

We keep doing our job from a distance, helping with goods delivery and phone call counseling (for children, workers in centers, poor families), because we need FGCI's ministry to keep going without obstacles. With God's help and your open heart, our desire is to continue to help the people in need so that we can bring a sparkle of hope during these hard times.

[Joel's note: We are sending additional dollars to help purchase and deliver relief items for needy children and families in both Romania and Moldova.]

We have only each other, and we all have God that will take care of us and will provide strength, health and blessings. Please continue to pray for us as we pray for you. Though still separated and distanced, we are close in our hearts through Jesus Christ. And this is our greatest hope and desire.

God bless you all! — Nootsie & Sergiu Ristea (from Bucharest, Romania)



Vlad Pogor (far left) and his wife Carolina (back row, center) and our Home of the Good Shepherd foster family in Nisporeni, Moldova.

**FGCI-Moldova staff member Vlad Pogor shares an update from our Home of the Good Shepherd foster home in Moldova**

Peace to all. I would like to tell you something about us. Here [at our home in Nisporeni] it is very interesting. We don't have time to get bored [during this Coronavirus lockdown]. We do gymnastics in the morning—and the children really like it. After 40 days of isolation, today we went for a walk and the children were pleasantly surprised. We do different activities at home. We have daily Zoom [online meetings] school lessons. We parents are a little tired, because every day we are surrounded by children who have different characters and desires. :) Otherwise, we are all well and healthy. Thank you very much for your prayers, material and spiritual support. May God help you in everything. — Vlad Pogor



Morning calisthenics at Home of the Good Shepherd in Nisporeni, Moldova.

Times are weird...but God is STILL faithful and good! This crisis will pass. Let us trust God as we continue to serve His children together.

Love in Jesus,

*Joel Burkum*

brother joel



**For God's Children**  
INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 434, Council Bluffs, IA 51502-0434 | fgci@fgci.org

**You may donate online by visiting [www.fgci.org](http://www.fgci.org)!**