



For God's Children
INTERNATIONAL

a personal note

from joel burkum
FGCI Executive Director

November 30, 2021

O Come, All Ye Faithful

*O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him born the King of Angels.
O come, let us adore Him; O come, let us adore Him;
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!*

Dear Friends,

As I write this note it's the last day of November 2021, and I'm preparing to leave for Romania (annual Christmas trip!) tomorrow morning. Praise God!

During this season of thanksgiving, you are on the top of my list of people for whom I am thankful. God has blessed us in so many ways through your support of the ministry of For God's Children International.

I want to thank you for the prayers you have offered up on our behalf over the past several difficult months. We have really felt the power of those prayers—please keep them coming! After nearly two years of being prevented from traveling to Romania and Moldova due to the pandemic, I was finally able to get to Romania at the end of September. Praise God!



Nootsie, Joel and Sergiu shortly after Joel's arrival in Bucharest in September. They have been working together in Romania for more than 25 years.

[And, GOOD NEWS, I'm scheduled to cross the border into Moldova on my upcoming trip to be with our Home of the Good Shepherd family and the kids and adults we serve there. We'll be doing LOTS of Christmas get-togethers!]

INVIGORATED!

It was wonderful to see God at work in so many ways on my trip. I am INVIGORATED from my journey, and I am excited to see what God has in store for our work as we enter a new generation of kids.

One of the very exciting things that God has accomplished is finding FGCI a new servant leader to serve as president for our Romanian sister foundation Fundatia FGCI-Romania. On December 1, our long-time president in Romania, Nootsie Ristea, retires after more than 25 years of service

with FGCI. We (and all of our kids!) will miss Nootsie very much. We wish Nootsie and Sergiu (Nootsie's husband and our ministry fleet manager in Romania) all the best as they begin their retirement years.



Nootsie Ristea with Mihai Pungila, new Fundatia FGCI-Romania president. He will be filling the position left by Nootsie as she enters retirement in December.

How excited we are that God has provided a young man named Mihai Pungila to take the reins of leadership in Romania. Mihai is in place to begin ministry with FGCI-Romania on December 1, 2021. We are very thankful that God has provided such a fine man as Mihai who has a heart for serving hurting people in Romania.

Mihai is married to Magdalena. They have three handsome sons. Currently, they live in Tulcea, Romania. For the past several years, Mihai and Magdalena have led a Christian benevolent ministry serving poor families in Tulcea County and around Romania. All of this ministry has been done "on the side" as Mihai has had a full-time job in Tulcea at an aluminum factory. It is a blessing that Mihai will now be able to serve full-time in ministry and that he will receive a full-time salary from FGCI that will give him plenty of time for ministry and family. Praise God! That's invigorating news!



Mihai and Magdalena Pungila with their three sons, Emanuel, Abiel and Elias.



Mihai is a gifted accordion player and singer.

On my upcoming trip to Romania and Moldova, Lord willing, I will have some good time to be with Mihai and Magdalena as Nootsie enters retirement and Mihai takes his position at the helm of FGCI-Romania. We will start with a bang! as we do Christmas programs in eastern Romania at the places where FGCI serves. Mihai preaches and he also sings and plays the accordion! So, I'm excited to sing Christmas carols with Mihai and me leading on accordion and guitar! Should be lots of fun!



FGCI-Romania Sunshine Room worker Nicoleta Breazu works with Ionela.

Looking forward to celebrating the birth of Christ with Nicoleta and our friends in Zebil at the center for adults with disabilities.



Reed and Silvia Lukow are taking care of FGCI's Lida House.

With the Davidsons needing to return to the States in 2019, our ministry house (Lida House) in Babadag, Romania, sat empty for most of the past two years. God sent us a wonderful couple to temporarily stay in the home until we find a new family to move in. **INVIGORATING!** My sweet nephew Reed Lukow and his beautiful new wife Silvia (one of our FGCI-Romania interpreters) plan to live in the house for the next year, as we wait for God to show us who He might send to live and minister out of our Lida House in the future. We are so thankful for them.

Another very invigorating aspect of my last trip was having a chance to meet up with several of our kids in Romania who are entering into adulthood. It's been a rough couple of pandemic years for these young people. Several of our kids are entering college and parenthood. They still need counseling and support, so it's good that we're getting back into their lives in a face-to-face manner once again. I look forward to seeing how our new FGCI-Romania president, Mihai, will bond with our kids and who our next generation of children will be. We will never abandon the kids we've been serving. Praise God that He is providing the means for us to continue!



Joel and Nootsie had the opportunity to meet with former Little Lambs boy, Marius.

And now, Moldova! I have been missing our precious family at Home of the Good Shepherd for two long years—seeing them only in online chats

and in photos sent by our leader there, Vlad Pogor. I pray that I am able to enter Moldova to see them and to celebrate the birth of Christ. I am sure I will be surprised at how much they all have grown. This will be the “booster shot” I've needed for a long time. Please pray that I can get in and out of Moldova without a Covid quarantine.



The Home of the Good Shepherd family: Vlad & Carolina Pogor are doing a fabulous job raising our foster kids in the Lord in Nisporeni, Moldova.

At the end of the Bible camp we sponsored for Roma (Gypsy) youth this summer, five young people accepted Christ as Savior and expressed their desire to be buried with Christ in baptism. They were baptized in Vulcanesti in August. Praise God! Now, that is a cause for all of us to be invigorated about ministry! I look forward to meeting up with these young people on my upcoming trip. Please pray for us as we provide Christmas programs for our Roma friends and brothers and sisters in Christ in Vulcanesti.

Vlad Pogor, our Moldova FGCI ministry leader, has been making some great evangelistic outreaches in the Nisporeni area. For months, we have been sending pandemic relief money to help poor families in Moldova. With the help of your gifts, we have purchased thousands of dollars' worth of food, clothing, firewood and other necessities for our needy friends there. This has opened the doors for evangelism. On my December trip, Vlad has planned for us to do a special Christmas program for some deaf families that he has met over the past two years! Invigorating! We are planning to visit several poor families with whom Vlad has developed good relationships over the past few years. Praise God!

I thank you for your loving and prayerful support of FGCI's ministry. We are thankful for our wonderful supporters who know us, who keep in contact with us, and who love us. You make our ministry much more effective—and a lot of fun! You truly invigorate me, that's for sure. Thanks for sharing. And may you have a wonderful Christmas season with your loved ones as you celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Love in Jesus,

Joel Burkum

brother joel



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