



For God's Children
INTERNATIONAL

a personal note

from *joel burkum*
Executive Director

Joel holds up the newly-fabricated Camp of the Good Shepherd entryway logo for a preview.

September 10, 2020

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (James 1:2,3).

Dear Friends,

What an "interesting" summer we've passed through. With all of its strangeness, there have been several silver linings to the storm clouds of the "lost summer of 2020." Allow me to share just a sprinkle of the down-pouring of ministry that happened this summer by God's grace and your generosity.

Summer Ministry in Moldova

Jeremy Befort and I (and our annual summer missions team members) were not permitted to travel from the States to Eastern Europe to work with our kids this summer. But, we thank God that our FGCI-Romania and FGCI-Moldova staff members and local co-laborers in Christ were able to serve our kids (and the adults with special needs we serve) all summer long. Throughout the months of April – August, we provided relief packages for needy kids and adults in Romania and Moldova. Thanks, to the many of you who responded to the special challenges of the Coronavirus shutdowns with special offerings to help us purchase much needed food and daily living supplies for our needy friends. [We continue to welcome any size of gift for the purchase of food and other relief items for needy families in Romania and Moldova.]

The following paragraphs are excerpted from reports we have received from our FGCI-Moldova staff member Vlad Pogor (house dad for our Home of the Good Shepherd foster home in Nisporeni). He has worked tirelessly with his wife Carolina to care for our kids and to put together food, supplies and ministry teams to distribute the relief packages (80+ at the time of writing) to the needy families, and to pray with them. Vlad also continues to serve as a leader of youth in the Roma (Gypsy) village of Vulcanesti.



Vlad (left) and Carolina (holding baby) Pogor and our Home of the Good Shepherd family in Nisporeni, Moldova.

April 27

Here at [Home of the Good Shepherd] is something very interesting. We don't have time to get bored. 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 school lessons. [Carolina and I] are a little tired because every day we are surrounded by children who have different personalities and desires :) ...Otherwise, we are all well and healthy. Thank you very much for your prayers, material and spiritual support.



Carolina shops for school clothes for our kids thanks to a special gift from Moldovan-American Christians in Minneapolis.

June 6

Here at [Home of the Good Shepherd] it is very joyful, and beautiful things happen every day. We celebrated Carolina's birthday (May 27) and Children's Day (June 1), and it was a wonderful time. The children are officially on vacation, and every day at home we will keep them busy getting ready for the classes they will be entering [this fall]. Of course, there will be fun, games and beautiful rest. We are all healthy and happy. Zina [our newest foster girl in the home] has turned into a nice child in behavior and everything; Vlada and Diana have become more responsible; Veronica is a good girl—we are encouraging her to read more; Roma is changing into a pleasant young man in deeds and thoughts. Ruslan can speak better and has been maturing in his thoughts.

June 15

I spoke today with [the minister at the Vulcanesti church] to get permission to meet with about 10 [Roma] young people in the church to do some Bible study, to pray and to sing. Of course, we will respect the distance and everything we need to avoid Covid-19. I don't know what [FGCI's] possibilities are, but if it is possible, we would like to make some [relief] packages for some Roma families. Today, I met with several [Roma families]. I would like to tell you a little more about the young people from Vulcanesti (Roma village). Ruslan [one of the Roma youth] is involved in the church in Nisporeni [the town where our Home of the Good Shepherd is located], he plays the guitar and he is very well received. All of the Roma students continue to learn English and are succeeding as far as I know. I'm sorry the [summer Bible] camp [for Roma kids] won't be possible; they were very eager for it.



Some of the Vulcanesti Roma youth prepare to deliver food packs.



Strawberries for our foster kids!

Thank you for Erik's gift (for Home of the Good Shepherd). It was a great blessing! We did a lot with this money. We celebrated Zina's birthday [It was her first-ever birthday party.]; I repaired the lawn mower; I bought the necessary materials to repair the water tank; I repaired the inflatable pool; I bought strawberries for winter, and I also bought cherries for canning; I repaired the computer, because it wasn't working; and, we had

some left over for ice cream. We want to get more fruits and vegetables for canning. Thank you very much.

July 17

I want to tell you about how it went with distributing the first set of food packages in Vulcanesti for 10 families. We were a very big team—I took the youth group from Vulcanesti with me to help distribute the packages. Indeed, there are many families in Vulcanesti who need help. They live very poorly—some of them do not even have a stove to cook with; instead, they cook over rocks. I also went to people who for a long time no one came to visit them, who did not even have the opportunity to go to the store because their health did not allow. For each of them we prayed and told them about God; at the same time, we invited them to church. There were people crying when they saw us. For example, Mr. Vasile cried. He said that up until the time we came to his house, he couldn't go to get food. He couldn't even walk, because his legs were swollen. The young people enjoyed [distributing the packages] very much, it was a good experience for them. The people from Vulcanesti say, "Thank you very much for this help, because it came at exactly the right time."



FGCI sponsors have provided thousands of dollars of food packs for needy families this summer.

July 20

I want to tell you about this [Vulcanesti] family. When they saw us entering with the package of food, she started to cry, she says that you arrived just in time, as she had just run out of food. Usually, the Roma have big and beautiful houses—as is their culture—but they are dirt poor. They may live in big houses, but most of them have nothing to eat.

I would like to tell you how things are going with [the Roma students] in Vulcanesti. Samson is taking additional Chemistry classes, because he will have a Chemistry exam next year. Renata is doing well in English. In Vulcanesti, the school is closing and there are quite a few children who would like to continue their studies at the school in Nisporeni, but they need money for the bus [an 8-mile-one-way trip]. Alic's children want to learn, but the transportation is expensive. And, if they don't work anywhere, it is difficult to pay for their trip. Alic says that it costs about 1,000 MDL (Moldovan Lei = around \$60) per month per person for transportation. I encouraged the people from Vulcanesti to gather in the morning to pray—and they began to pray. They are passionate for the Lord!

July 24 (and August 31)

This grandfather (pictured at left) adopted his own grandson. The boy was dying: he had intestinal parasites that had already reached his liver. But



A grateful family receives a food pack just after running out of food.



A grandfather and his adopted grandson are surprised and delighted to receive a food packet.

the grandfather fought for the boy and saved him! When I brought them the food, they were very happy. The grandfather said that I came at the right time, as they were going through a very difficult period. I prayed for him and his grandson. The boy was very happy when he saw this package of items, tears were falling down his face. It would be nice if we could still support this elderly man with his grandchild.

Today, we went [again] to the home of Valeriu and his grandson Alexandru. When the boy saw us, he ran towards us with great anticipation. Then he ran around the yard—we could not stop him! We brought him breakfast cereal. We also brought meat. And he shouted, "Meat, meat!" with an indescribable joy. The grandfather was in tears. Carolina and I were excited to see this, and realized that it gives us a lot of joy when we can bring joy to others. Alexandru is 4 years old and has been living with his grandfather for a year and a half. I was wondering if it is possible to help him even with money every month, because this child also needs medical checkups, and many other things. But, the grandfather is disabled and has no possibility to get a job. I was thinking, maybe, to include him in our FGCI family. Joel once said that we should watch for families who already have children under their care, and try to help them. I think [the needs here are] great. We prayed for the grandfather and his grandson. We told them that we will visit more often. We will take Alexandru to our house, so he can also play with our children. And, we will give him a bath. Maybe we can show him the love that he is eager to receive. We are very grateful for the support of this [food relief] project. It really brings joy to people.

July 29

We finally finished giving food relief packages in Vulcanesti, with the help of the FGCI team and the Lord we gave packages to 57 families in Vulcanesti. We gave to all the needy families in Vulcanesti and we gave different things to different families. For example, we gave diapers to two families that had just run out of diapers. Veronica [one of the Roma ladies] was very happy when I gave her diapers and the package of food. Some people were crying with joy, saying that God had sent you. There was a lady who, when I offered to pray, knelt down and thanked God for the packages. I gave a package to a family in which their father was a man who used drugs and all the money they had was spent on drugs. The boy was very happy when he saw us with food. The people from Vulcanesti asked me to thank you from the bottom of their hearts. They pray for the whole team, and they are very happy that you have not forgotten them. Thank you very much for this help.



A relieved single mom with three sons is happy to receive a food packet to help during the Covid-19 shutdown.

So sorry I don't have more space to share more of these exciting stories of God at work in Moldova. But, I praise God for all of the good work being done in Jesus' name for our dear friends in Moldova. And, I thank you for the generous gifts that you give to help us provide hope, dignity and love in Jesus' name for the children and needy adults we serve.

Love in Jesus,

Joel Burkum

brother joel



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