



MIDDLE RIDGE UNITING CHURCH
264 Stenner St Middle Ridge

16th – 18th June 2023

Bottle Tree Remote Area Ministry

Please pray for...

- Opportunities to make contact with farmers in need on remote properties
- Jamie, Pat and newly baptized child Ryder.
- Chaplaincy support for staff of Uniting Care.
- Vision for the future for this ministry.

Report

The Bottle Tree RAM commenced officially at my induction on the 24th February. I wish to thank all who attended, and especially Yvonne and Highfields Uniting Church for hosting this beautiful event which I will always treasure. What a way to begin a ministry placement! I'll try to fulfill at least some of the expectations!

My husband, Les and I, arrived in Roma during the height of summer, and it is now heading into the winter chills. We are enjoying the manse, the people of the Maranoa, and are adapting to the changes to the climate and culture. We are grateful to the Roma congregation for their support.

My ministry can be divided into three areas: Congregational, Chaplaincy with Uniting Care Connect 100 and Frontier Services. There are unique and common elements within each.

Congregational – Monthly church services held at Roma UCA; Wallumbilla UCA; Injune Churches together. Bi monthly services at Wandoan (in homes), and quarterly at Arcadia Valley (in the community hall). Most of these services are ecumenical (Lutheran, Catholic, Anglican and Uniting), in which we share communion, and have between 12 and 20 in attendance. I am hoping to be able to lead worship in Miles, Mitchell, Surat and Taroom in the future. Most churches/gatherings do not have their own musician, so we depend on recordings, cd's, with the liturgy on ppt. We have purchased a smart tv for this purpose in outlying areas. Offerings from these services are either returned to Roma, or Injune C.T. or deposited into a Bottle Tree RAM account specifically for this ministry. This role also encompasses pastoral support and support with mission in each community.

Chaplaincy with Uniting Care Connect 100 – My role is to support, as chaplain, the staff of Blue Care in Roma, and other Uniting Care Agencies in the area eg RAFS, (Remote Area Family Services) and FADS (Family And Disability Services) in Injune. This is a wonderful opportunity to support the teams who give so much. Together with members of Roma Uniting, we created gift parcels with homemade goodies for the staff of Blue Care, Roma. The gifts were greatly appreciated. I aim to spend one day each week in this role, through visitation, and phone call support. As a new chaplain, I have received training in Disaster Management, Mental Health and Uniting Care “Train the Trainer”.

Frontier Services Since my arrival, we have driven through the Maranoa, Western Downs, and edged into the Banana Shire. Driving these roads is quite stressful, as we watch out for Kangaroos, and navigate bumpy roads and huge trucks. We have trialed a few motels, when attending the Wandoan, Taroom, Wallumbilla shows, and when leading church services and speaking at the Anzac Day ceremony at Wandoan. We love the drives and landscape on the whole.

I have made connection with many service providers who support farmers and people with disabilities, socially, mentally and economically. These include Government agencies, and independent businesses eg TRACC, Ag Assist, and Connect Ag. They are very appreciative of our presence here.

I spent an afternoon with Tilly at “Access Learning and Training” in Mitchell and was impressed with her support of people with disabilities, through the arts, and through small business ventures. We are working towards partnering together in a project in the future.

Due to the pressures of time on farmers today, the challenge for us is how to make contact with those on remote properties. We are discerning ways this can be done. We have found some success through contacts from congregational members and through suggested contacts from service providers.

However, one of the best ways to contact families may be to offer a similar service to that of RAFS (Remote Area Family Services), who offer educationally enriching activities for children and families. With this in mind, we are applying for funding from the Maranoa Regional Council for an attractive trailer to take creative, stimulating, and therapeutic activities out to properties, appropriate for all ages from 1 to 99.

A story to share...

It was exciting to perform a baptism in Wandoan. An unchurched couple approached me, via the school chaplain at Chinchilla. This couple had moved to Wandoan, to 'start a new life', away from family pressures. After meeting with them a few times in Wandoan, the Baptism was organized for the 21st May, to be held on their outdoor patio, and to which the large family cohort were invited, along with local members of the now Wandoan Faith Community. John and Jillian Little found the 'baptismal font' and lectern from the now closed Wandoan church and sourced 50 chairs from the local Apex club. When the day arrived, we were greeted with a variety of cigarettes, and dress codes that would rarely be found in any church. The patio was beautifully decorated with balloons, banners, and white cloth blew in the wind. A huge baptismal cake graced the side table.

The service commenced at 11 am with video recordings of contemporary music and the sermon titled "Why do we baptize children?" After the baptism of Ryder, I invited people to reaffirm their baptism. Three families came forward to ask if their children could be baptized. I found myself spontaneously baptizing three more children, the youngest 3 days old, and the oldest 5 years old (who didn't want to let go of her piece of pizza). The love of the parents for their children was heart-warming and deeply moving.

We aim to return to the home in Wandoan, to again lead worship, with the members of the Wandoan Faith community in attendance. Please pray for this family – Jamie, Pat and child Ryder.

Recommendations

1. That the report be received

Report Submitted by:

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If you have questions, please email before the meeting.