



ST STEPHENS UNITING CHURCH
51 Neil Street, Toowoomba

3rd – 5th November 2023

Cunnamulla, Burke & Wills

Please pray for...

- Guidance as I begin to plan for 2024
- That my presence at Christmas community events is received well
- That I maintain the strength and wisdom to reach whoever the Lord sends my way
- Safety while travelling

Report

What a whirl wind start to my mission as the bush chaplain with Frontier Services in the Cunnamulla, Burke & Wills RAM. It began as I moved from Gympie some 750kms to Charleville at the end of August. Two days there had me pack up again and join the Birdsville Races team head west. Two days driving and we arrived safely only for me to go down with the flu two days before I officially started on the 1st September 2023.

I had a quiet chuckle to myself that I couldn't call in sick on my first day as I had the Moderator, Andrew Gunton, my Presbytery Minister, Yvonne McRostie and the National Director of Frontier Services all present and expecting me on deck. Thankfully, I recovered enough to don my uniform and start work as promised. It was quite an emotional beginning as I stood, the first day on the job, outside the AIM clinic, 100 years to the year, after Rev John Flynn officially leased the Royal Hotel to begin work in Birdsville.

Our time spent in Birdsville was wonderful, meeting the team and many locals in the Birdsville town. The beginning of relationships was established, and I hope to call back there before Christmas to do a recon of the work needed to re establish the Birdsville AIM clinic in 2024.

This project will be a joint project between the owner, Miss Jenna Brooke, on of her staff, Sam, the National Frontier Service office, Outback Links and myself. Watch this space as we begin a good work.

September then began with folks coming out from Toowoomba to help fix a few issues with my home. Thankfully, we made great headway as Keith & Ann Flemming worked their magic. I also want to take

this time to thank Rob Callow and Millar Alletson who greeted me on day one when I turned up in Charleville to start my new life. They worked with Keith tirelessly to tidy up, repair and welcome me home!

My volunteering started quickly with helping in the kitchen at the Charleville Performing Arts Festival supporting School Chaplaincy. Then it was volunteering at the Remote Australia Matters conference, an organisation that is looking to find ways to advocate for better health in MMM6 & 7 areas. This week saw me rub shoulders with prominent doctors, politicians and well-connected community members.

I also fitted in, in no particular order, a trip back to the Sunshine Coast for the Downs Presbytery Ministers Retreat. It was wonderful to meet all my counterparts in ministry and see their love for their church families and each other. I snuck in a quick visit to my family, that filled my heart.

I made an effort to meet as many people as possible who I felt would be good to connect with. Starting with all the church ministers and their families. I have had many over for dinner and can't count the amount of coffee I have drunk at social engagements. Charleville has two amazing coffee shops and they are very popular for meetings and such.

I have attended several online trainings, volunteered at the pre-polling booth (my idea was that if I was there I would meet most everyone in town and they would see me) but on the second day came down with a flu again. Oh dear...thankfully not covid!

An interesting event was when I was called out to the local hospital by a young (18) girl's aunt, who lived in Bundaberg. The girl had rolled her car and had been flown to the Charleville hospital by the RFDS. She had lost her phone and knew no one so as a pastor, I could sit with her and pass some time away while they waited to send her to Toowoomba for a CT scan. Thankfully she was fine and discharged the next day.

While all this was happening, I unpacked and made a home for myself and do I love it! Charleville is such a friendly place, locals always want to chat and invite you to whatever is happening in the community. At this stage I feel like I haven't been able to get out the front gate of Charleville but I know this will happen soon. It is a time of planting me and I very much believe that the ministry will bloom in 2024. Once the heat is a little subsided I will be on the road with Jesus, and I cant wait!!!

Recommendations

1. That this report be received.

Report Submitted by:

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If you have questions, please email before the meeting.