

# Outback Owens

Latest news from the 'Curry with Simon & Angela Owen



## October 2023

Reflecting over the past few months we can see many ways God has been answering our prayers with some significant gospel opportunities, including the commencement of RI in Cloncurry State School and the reopening of Julia Creek Anglican Church! We are greatly encouraged by what God has been doing and we know you will share in this encouragement too.

### Late June – School Holidays Kids' Club

When we published our last newsletter, we were in the throes of preparing for our second Kids' Club for 2023. Due to the large number of kids that came in April, we split this Kids' Club into two groups. This enabled us to have more kids join in (60 kids in total over the four days!) and it kept things more manageable for the leaders. It was an Olympic-themed program that involved many competitive games and races, and we focused on running for a 'crown that lasts forever' (1 Corinthians 9:25). The week concluded with a celebration Sunday service, which all the kids and families were invited to, and some attended. We give great thanks for some of our church members and the three BCA Nomad couples who bravely and energetically served us this week and made this Kids' Club possible.



Cloncurry Holiday Kids' Club

### July – Starting RI in Cloncurry!

After the Kids' Club, we enjoyed a refreshing family holiday which helped us recharge the batteries before starting Term 3. When we returned, Simon started weekly Religious Instruction (RI) classes at Cloncurry State School with around 25 students from Years 1–3 and 10 students from Years 4–6. More students are opting in each week, and many are becoming more enthusiastic about Jesus. It has been good timing coming off the back of the Kids' Club and the soccer season, as many of the kids already know Simon. RI hasn't been taught in our local school for a long while so there has been a

fair bit of preparation and consultation in the lead-up. We are so thankful for all your prayers and ask that you keep praying for this important ministry as it continues.

### August – Large funeral & reopening of St Barnabas church in Julia Creek

In early August Simon had the privilege of conducting a large community funeral for a much loved and respected local woman which involved around 500 people gathering at our local council precinct. It was a significant opportunity to come alongside many as they grieved and celebrated this woman's life, as well as share the hope of the gospel with so many in our community. We praise God that many seemed blessed by Simon's ministry and spoke positively about his message.

At the end of the month, we had the privilege and joy of reopening St Barnabas Anglican Church in Julia Creek with its first church service since 2019! This has been a true partnership effort as we've had BCA Nomads and volunteers from Ross River Anglican (one of our BCA link churches) help clean and repair the building to get it ready for use, as well as the prayers and donations of other BCA supporter churches and individuals.

After finishing up our Cloncurry Sunday morning service, we drove 1.5 hours down the road to Julia Creek for a 2.30 pm reopening service. We had 16 people, including five children, at our first service which was an encouraging turnout. After another long drive, we arrived home at 7 pm. It is a big day out for our family, but we're encouraged by the positive attitude and cooperation of our kids as we bring the gospel to Julia Creek. We ran another service two weeks later and plan to do monthly services ongoing. We've been encouraged by the locals who have joined us at the services and helped us reopen the church, as well as others we've heard from living on stations up to 150 kms out of Julia Creek who haven't yet been able to attend but are keen to in the future. Even those who aren't believers have been supportive of the church's reopening including the local ABC radio station which interviewed Simon in the lead-up!



St Barnabas Julia Creek



Julia Creek reopening service

### September – Julia Creek Kids' Club

A week after our second church service in Julia Creek we returned to run a two-day Kids' Holiday Club using the same Olympics program we used in Cloncurry. We praise God for the 14 kids who attended (many of whom also came last year) and were very engaged with the Bible teaching. After this, we travelled on to Townsville for Simon to attend Synod, to visit our supporting church Ross River Anglican, as well as have a small holiday break.



Julia Creek Kids' Club



## General ministry in Cloncurry

Apart from the highlights above, over the past quarter, we have been thankful to have consistent attendance at St Andrew's Church in Cloncurry, including many young families. We have been thankful for all who are using their gifts to serve the church, including a young Christian couple God has recently brought to our congregation from Brisbane, who have been a great encouragement to us and our congregation. Simon has been doing a Big Picture Bible Overview sermon series helping our congregation see how the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation points to Jesus. This has been encouraging for many. We have also had many Christian tourists and BCA Nomads visit us over the winter months and even had some Nomads clean our storeroom and vestry, as well as transform our garden!

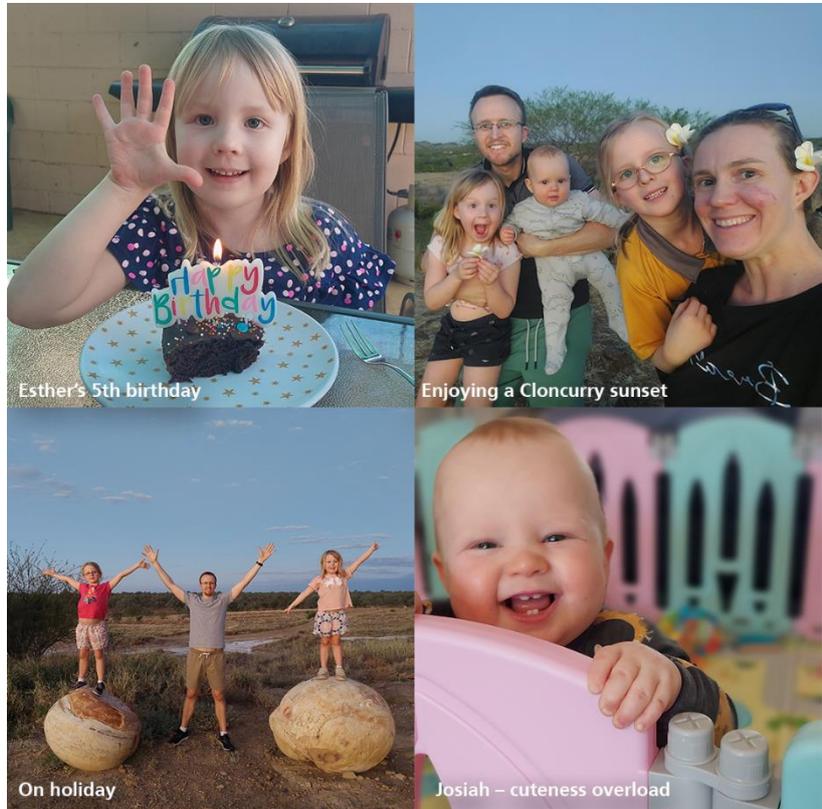


We have also continued to be involved in the *mainly music* playgroup where Angela, Esther and Josiah enjoy dancing along with the other team members and getting to know other parents and kids. Simon has continued helping with Friday morning pancake breakfast at the school as well as coaching junior soccer on Wednesdays and Fridays. He has also had many opportunities to pray with and pastorally care for members of our church and community.

## Family & community activities

We've had some fun times as a family over this winter period with the Merry Muster Rodeo weekend (joined by Angela's parents who were visiting) and the Beat the Heat Festival where the girls performed their dances in the main street of town. Cloncurry really does community events well! We also celebrated three of our birthdays, had a party for Esther's 5th birthday, attended many other kids' parties and enjoyed time with our parents. The girls are continuing to enjoy living in Cloncurry and 10-month-old Josiah is winning hearts with his cuteness and keeping us on our toes with his new mobility.

It's amazing to look back over the past few months and realise how much has happened. None of it has been without challenges or tiredness but we give God great thanks for His daily grace and the strength He provides to keep serving Him in our weakness. We couldn't do any of this without the prayers and support of His people, so thank you for your faithful partnership in this ministry.



## Praise points

- Please join us in giving God great thanks and praise for all the gospel opportunities He has enabled this past quarter and for all the people He has reached with His Word.
- Praise God for the commencement of RI and pray for all the students attending in Term 4 to be engaged and receptive to the gospel.
- Praise God for all the kids who have attended Kids' Clubs in Cloncurry and Julia Creek this year (over 80 kids) and pray that the seeds of faith planted will grow and bear fruit.
- Praise God for the reopening of Julia Creek Anglican Church.

## Pray for:

- Other believers in Julia Creek and surrounding areas to be able to come along to church and be encouraged. Pray for this small congregation to grow in maturity of faith and love.
- Simon as he conducts his first wedding in early October.
- Strength, wisdom, and perseverance for us in Term 4, as we approach the end of the year, and the weather gets hotter.
- God's protection on us as a family, for regular physical, mental and spiritual refreshment, and growth in love for God and each other.
- Please continue to pray for St Andrew's Church Cloncurry, that as followers of Jesus, we will keep growing in our faith and that new people will keep coming back each week and that more lost people will be saved.

*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:11-12*



Blessings and thanks,

*Simon, Angela, Grace, Esther & Josiah*

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