

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We pray that you and your loved ones were encouraged by the grace and truth of Christ throughout the end of 2025. To be honest, as I read the first chapter of John a couple weeks ago, I was very much feeling the ups and downs of ministry here. The support and involvement of brothers and sisters in Christ all across the country throughout the Christmas season has been uplifting, as well as worshipping and breaking bread with fellow believers in Warm Springs.

But the season has also been filled with friends and neighbors in Warm Springs in various degrees of need, dealing with repeated disappointments, severe loss, and deeply felt abandonment. The weight of those things and the hope of Christ experienced through His word, His people, and His grace exist in what sometimes feels like a paradox. But as I've read John 1 again, I remember God's closeness in a hard place: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The same Word that was the source of life at creation humbled Himself on the cross to offer new life. He mourns with us, rejoices with us, intercedes for us, and His Holy Spirit lives in us. This hope is sure when our feelings aren't. It is a hope that outlasts everything else. And as I think back over the Christmas season, I pray that each person we spent time with will come to hold onto that same hope if they haven't yet.

However you participated in ministry in Warm Springs this past year, whether that was through consistent prayer, financial support, coming on a summer team, putting together Christmas shoeboxes, donating gift cards or blankets for elder gifts, or in some other way, we are very thankful for you. We had meaningful interactions with more than 200 people this Christmas season, and you were a big part of that.

At our kids club Christmas party, there were over 60 kids who felt loved and seen because of the Christmas shoeboxes they received. Not only that, they also heard about Jesus' birth and the gift that God has given us through His Son. One girl who had never heard the Christmas story before was quietly thrilled because she played the character of Mary in the story. I doubt she will forget that story anytime soon.

At church, we had close to 30 kids come for the Christmas program where many of them acted out the Christmas story (we had a lot of sheep and shepherds) and sang Joy to the World (with motions!) for everyone who came to the service. We have been busting at the seams most Sundays, praise God, and sometimes the kids outnumber the adults!

At Young Life, which we split into two clubs this past year due to numbers, we had a Christmas party with games, gifts, and a talk about God's grace and redemptive plan in the person of Christ. The youth also participated in the community Christmas parade once again and did a great job decorating the float! We've heard from several of the young people involved that Young Life is a place they feel safe, where they can be themselves, and where they feel comfortable sharing about their lives. Several young people have given their lives to Christ over

the past year, many of those have been baptized (some by Tomo), and some are consistently coming to church on Sunday. Please continue to pray for deepened faith and relationship for these leaders of tomorrow, and pray for those of us who are discipling them.

Over the week before Christmas, Tomo, Juliana, and I visited with and delivered gifts to more than 50 elders in the community (Holly was busy cooking food for nearly everything we did - she's amazing!) There were several elders who had passed away since last Christmas, so there was grief there, but there were also many more we've gotten to know over the last year, so there was joy in that. God gave us many opportunities to sit and talk for a while, pray for those in each home, and share where our hope lies, in a few cases with elders who are brothers or sisters in Christ.

Also, thanks to the involvement of a few different churches, we adopted two families this Christmas and provided several gifts for each kid in those households. These were families who had a particularly difficult year and could really use the encouragement and support of people coming alongside them in that way.

As we head into this new year, I would ask that you continue to pray for the ministry that is going on here. Pray that God's strength will be evident in our weakness, that our friends and neighbors in Warm Springs will experience God's love in a transformational way, and that the eternal hope we have in Christ will shine brightly in the darkness. Most of all, pray that our confidence and the confidence of every believer in Warm Springs will be in the completed redemptive work of Jesus. "The one you calls you is faithful and He will do it."

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:4)

With much love,
The Shaws