

"I found God!" -7 Year Old, Warm Springs Christmas Party 2025



This year has had its ups and downs, but the blessings never stopped coming. My New Year started with family problems that threatened to bring down the healing and freedom I found in Christ. But, God placed great friends and leaders in my life to restore me and help me on my walk BACK to the Lord.

Past trauma and pain were in the past where they belonged, but with the things that were coming out at the beginning of this year, they were beginning to climb into the front seat. Trying to take the wheel. I am pretty sure I almost crashed. I was

losing the joy I had working in youth ministry. I was even less sociable. I avoided people.

Turtled, in my own words. I know myself well enough that I would begin to lash out and hurt those who were not even a part of the issue or problem. My friends saw my struggle, my pain, and the hurt I was desperately trying to deny. They had the fun and hard job of saying, I need to leave, get off the rez, and remove myself completely from the situation. So to start my emergency sabbatical, I was gone in 2 days, back to Indigenous Bible College in Flagstaff, AZ.

I was there for months healing, being restored, renewed, and rebuilding the fracturing armor I had on. I found my peace again, my identity, love, patience, grace, and hope. These values were missing in my life and I needed to remember who and whose I was. Mending the Soul was a vital tool in my restoration process, along with my former mentors' guidance and biblical truths that they had to learn to live out so their students, like me, could benefit from their

experience. I walked away from IBC, restored and ready to be home. After months of meetings, counseling, and **finding God**, I got to go home.

“Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we be called children of God, and **so we are!**” 1 John 3:1

When I got home, I knew. I felt the difference. . . in me. I was ready to be home, but not fully here. That fear that drove me away was trying to sneak back in. I COULD NOT start full-time ministry after being gone for months. There was a process in play already. Which began my part-time jump back into Sacred Road.

“. . .and so we are!” 1 Jn. 3:1b was my mantra when working in the kitchen. I have NEVER worked in the kitchen during my time at SRM, and that was an experience. I hopped right in and asked many questions. When I was working through healing, we had to find one verse that would be our mantra when we needed to be reminded that God IS present. I am his child when I feel dumb asking how to use the food processor for the 3rd time, so essentially when I feel stupid. I am his child when I figured out I make good pickles even though I don't even like them. So when I feel victorious. I am his child when I forget to seek him. He **found me**. He always finds me. He never loses me. And being reminded of that while working in the kitchen making pickles, slicing and dicing veggies EVERY SINGLE DAY, and making banana cream pudding dessert, helped my own heart in seeing that I still had a place in the church I grew up in, even if it wasn't with youth ministry for a short hiatus. I am his child and in this season of celebrating his birthday, as one of my favorite church moms calls Christmas, we went on a few trips to other reservations and that was the quote that started my overall yearly reflection.

Warm Springs 2025 Christmas party had me at the rice sensory bin where I found these weird looking Jesus rubber figures. I questioned Tomo what the heck it was, and he said the kids like them so I shrugged and left it at that. Tomo knows his kids and I trust Tomo. After the wave of children came to our Christmas kids club, a few made their way to me and started their hunt for acrylic ducks and baby mushrooms. "I found God!" was said in excitement. A testament to the work our brothers and sisters are doing in Warm Springs. Every time I hid the little rubber Jesus in the rice, the scramble to find him was the same as when they first got to my little station. "I found him!"

This year was in its own way continually challenging, but also one I would not change. The pain and hurt I felt at the beginning was nothing compared to the joy and freedom I found again in my heavenly Father. He kept me in his hands, and was my tower and fortress when I needed it. And reminded me that I am His, forever. I am free and can walk in that freedom. I will stumble. I will fail, I will struggle. But He walks with me and helps my heart remember, he has me, ALWAYS.

