# First With The News

**Advent / Christmas 2018 Edition**



**First United Church**

Seeking to be a welcoming community of Christian faith,

proclaiming and celebrating the love of God in Jesus Christ

through the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

# Delivered by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Please visit our website! www.1stunitedchurch.ca**

**UPCOMING DATES & EVENTS**

**OCTOBER**

**Sat. Oct. 27** - **\*FALL RUMMAGE SALE** (pg. 6)

**NOVEMBER**

**Sun., Nov. 11** – \***REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY:** Worship @ 10:30am

\***SECRET SANTA BAGS** will be out in the sanctuary (pg. 7)

**Sat., Nov. 17 – \*HOLLY FAIR CHRISTMAS BAZAAR** (pgs. 8 & 9)

\*Christmas Parade **FLOAT & COCOA, COOKIES & CAROLS** at the church! (pg. 10)

**DECEMBER**

**Sat., Dec. 1** - \***THE HAT AND MITT RUN** – 8am (pg. 11)



**Sun., Dec. 2 \*ADVENT 1 CELEBRATION** – Worship (@10:30am) will include

**trimming the Christmas tree**, a carol sing & more. Following worship everyone

is invited to a **catered lunch downstairs** (Freewill offering). (pg. 12)

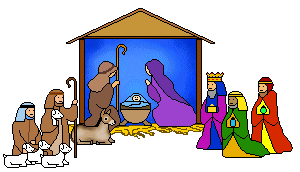
\***Pageant costumes** available from now to Christmas Eve. (pg. 11)

**Sun., Dec.9 – \*ADVENT 2**  - **GIFT SUNDAY**: Worship @ 10:30am

***\**SECRET SANTA** bags are returned BY today (pg. 7)

\*We invite you to bring **non-perishable food items**for Christmas Care (pg. 7)

**\*CHRISTMAS VISITATION SUNDAY** (pg. 13)

**Sun., Dec. 16 – \*ADVENT 3:** Worship @ 10:30am

**Sun., Dec. 23 –\*ADVENT 4:** Worship @ 10:30am

**Mon., Dec. 24 – CHRISTMAS EVE:** Worship @ 7pm (pg. 14)

\*will include the Children’s Bethlehem Pageant (pg. 14)

**From the Pastor’s Desk …**

… RECLAIMING THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTMAS

**“And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus,**

**for he will save his people from their sins.”** (Matthew 1:21, NLT)

My daughter who sang in the choir of her class during a Christmas concert was rehearsing at home. The tune of one song sounded like “O Christmas Tree”, but the words read “O Faithful pine; O Faithful pine …” I did attend the Concert, but to my surprise, none of the songs sang that evening conveyed the idea of “Christmas”, “Jesus”, “Christ”, “God” or similar religious language.

We all know Christmas is about the Christ-Child, but most of the cards we receive don’t reflect that theme. They simply express the mood of our time: “Season’s Greetings”, “Holiday Greetings” or “Happy Holidays”. Have Christians lost the essence of Christmas or are we ashamed to associate ourselves with the very reason for the occasion?

A couple of years ago, a *Newsweek Magazine* article on “The Search for the Sacred” lamented the changes, especially in religious matters and spirituality as experienced in the last century. The writer rightly observed that “people feel they want something they’ve lost”. Sadly, despite this void in the human life, people “just don’t remember what it is they’ve lost”, the article concluded. It is not different today!

What have we really lost? We have lost the *meaning*, the *master* and the *message* of Christmas. Firstly, Christmas literally *means* the “Mass of Christ” from the Old English, *Cristes Maesse*. In other words, it is the “liturgy” that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas is the time we come to “adore Him, Christ the Lord.” It is worship time. In the Gospels, the *magi* came to worship the “King of the Jews”, while some shepherds also came to bow before the Christ Child, and the angels celebrated His birth.

Secondly, we have lost the ***Master*** of the occasion – the Christ of Christmas. As I mentioned earlier, most of the greeting cards we receive show that we have put aside the Baby whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas. Imagine attending a birthday party and ignoring the person whose birthday you went to celebrate or a wedding party with no bride and groom present! As people of God, we must put back Christ into the celebration.

Lastly, we have lost the ***message*** of Christmas – “God and sinners reconciled”. The angels announced, our “*Saviour* is born … He is Christ, the Lord” (Luke 2:11). The Christmas message was conceived in the Garden of Eden. God gave us life, but we rejected the goodness of God. For this reason, we are estranged from God, but Christ was born to restore all broken relationships, and to free us from all that hold us captive – the first message is *salvation* to all who believe. Also, the message brings us the *peace* of the God of peace; the Christ Child is the “Prince of Peace”. There are many people out there who know no peace of mind. True peace has eluded many. We are messengers of God’s *Shalom* to a world beset with chaos, confusion, and conflict. Real peace is a relationship with God, free from guilt and sin, through Jesus Christ. Lastly, the message of Christmas is *new life* in Christ. To Charles Wesley, Christ Jesus is: ***Born that man no more may die.***

***Born to raise the sons of earth,***

***Born to give them second birth***.

He was born to give us life, a new birth – *eternal life* in Him (John 3:3, 16). Salvation, peace or new life is for all to receive. It will be yours by believing and receiving Christ.

This advent season, let’s put the Christ back into Christmas. The family next door may lack the peace Christ offers. You may want to reach out to that family with the love of Christ in a tangible way. One small act of kindness or words of encouragement may make Christ real in the lives of your co-workers. We are God’s messengers sent to reclaim the *meaning*, *master* and *message* of Christmas. Together, we can influence or impact our society when we partner with the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hannah and the kids join me to wish all at First United and beyond a happy, meaningful and peaceful Christmastide and the blessings of God.

**O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.**

Keep the faith, and spread it gently,

I am your pastor and friend,

**Rev. Emmanuel K. Ofori**



**NOTES FROM JODY**

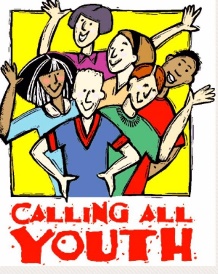
I look forward to another season of music here at First!  The Senior Choir has begun to rehearse again after a summer break and I appreciate their spirit and love of music.  Please feel free to join us!  I'll leave you with one of my favourite quotes from a book called "A Song to Sing, A Life to Live" by Emily Saliers:

     "Music is rooted in the human soul, and it gives voice to the spirit of human communities.  Without songs to sing, life would be diminished.  Thus, listening to music with loved ones or strangers, and developing musical skills are more than ways of making sounds.  They are spiritual practices, shared activities open to those who seek lives of greater depth and richness."



Blessings,

Jody

**First Youth**

**Grades 8-12**

Every Thursday 7:00 – 8:30pm

Led by Chris Ross, continuing with the Alpha Program

**Grades 5-7**

Every other Thursday (Oct. 25, Nov. 8, 22 & Dec.6)

7:00 – 8:30pm

Led by Justin Chute, focusing on Outreach.

(Ideas welcome!)



**FALL RUMMAGE SALE**

**Saturday, October 27**

**8:30 – 11:30 am**

Looking for fall and winter clothing, special ladies wear for our popular boutique, shoes, boots, hats, mittens, china, glassware, vintage items, fall and Christmas decorations, jewellery, luggage, small household items (please no TVs, microwaves or computers), books, games and toys. Donated items may be left inside west accessibility door Mon. - Thurs. 9am-2:30pm. Please call Lois Whiteman 519-631-3337 if you are able to help sell on sale day. Thank you!

 **SECRET SANTA BAGS**

**WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE SANCTUARY**

**Sunday, November 11**

**Please help yourself to a bag marked either girl or boy and the age you would like to shop for. Once you have shopped, please return your gift/s back to the sanctuary as soon as you like, or BY GIFT SUNDAY, December 9.**

**Christmas Care will be picking them up the very next day.**

**Helpful Hints for Santa Bags:**

* **Please don’t gift wrap.**
* **Don’t hesitate to buy more than one of the same gift – you will be helping more than one child. (Our gifts from each bag will be separated to cover as many children as possible – the need is great.)**
* **Some gift suggestions:** **puzzles, colouring books, crayons, markers, gloves, mittens, hats, age appropriate toys (store clerks can be helpful with ideas and Moms in our congregation too!).**

**OUR GIFTS WILL GO TO CHRISTMAS CARE**

**and from there they will be distributed along**

**with FOOD HAMPERS.**

**If you would like to contribute to the FOOD HAMPERS, please bring non perishable food items on our GIFT SUNDAY, December 9.**

**Our Secret Santa Project has become a tradition here at First Church. Thanks to the generosity of this congregation, thousands of children have received Christmas Gifts & many families - groceries.**

**Our Holly Fair Christmas Bazaar!!!**



This First Family event will be upon us by the time you receive this newsletter...

**Saturday, November 17, 2018 9am – noon**

**Do we want another successful Holly Fair this year?**

**Of course we do!! What do we really need?**

**Everyone’s help & participation!**

**We can’t do it without you!**

**With our First Family in a transition, I am asking for your most needed help this year. We are in need of;** convenors, volunteers, and most of all….donations from our congregation of items to sell.

When we don’t have those great donations to sell…there are no gifts to buy.

**We all need to come together as the First Family.** I know we all are busy, but we need your help to make this another successful Holly Fair!

**If we focus on our strengths; what we do well at First United - our fundraising events and the people involved in making them happen, are some of them.**

**Holly Fair Convenor Team 2018**

Holly Fair Café **Convenor needed**

Bake Shop Lois Whiteman

Country Store Sharlene Scott

Holiday Entertaining Betty Lou Donaldson

Bookstore Edith Nimmo/Sharon Hutchison

Children’s Corner Store **Convenor needed**

Ice Fishing TBA

Attic Treasures **Convenor needed**

Crafter’s Market Sherry Johnstone

Door Prizes/Silent Auction Sheryl Haaijema

Volunteer’s Car Parking Mark Snowsell

Beautiful Overall Decorating Kathy Nicli + volunteers

Publicity Vicki Snowsell

**Thank you to those convenors returning this year.**

**Fresh Outdoor Arrangements…..**  Back by popular demand! Price: $30.00

**We NEED embellishments.** If you have any to donate, let Sherry Johnstone know!

**AREAS OF HELP NEEDED:**

* **Set up of tables on Wednesday morning (Nov. 14) 8:30 am - ?**
* **Taking down of tables at noon on November 17 (after the event).**
* **Convenor for Holly Fair Café, Attic Treasures and Children’s Corner Store, as well as**

**Volunteers to help decorate Gym and Assembly hall**



* **Donations to Silent Auction and Door Prize Draw**

**Dates to remember:**

**Donations for Holly Fair**

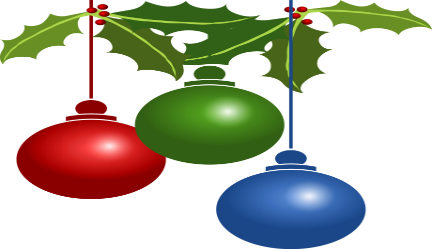
Drop off items for Holly Fair - at the church

* Sunday, November 11 – **before or** **after worship – leave in room just**
* **down from elevator across the hall**  (no perishable items)
* Wednesday, November 14 1 to 3 pm
* Thursday, November 15  9 am to 12 pm   1 to 3 pm
* Friday, November 16 9 am to 7 pm

**NOTE to donors:**

If items are not priced when donated (except for Attic Treasures), they will be priced at the discretion of the convenors.

We are excited for everyone to attend our Holly Fair 2018. We know you will see friends and family and enjoy your shopping time. So many great treasures and gifts to buy for that special someone, even for yourself. Months, days and hours of preparation, so many people working together, has come down to this one day. We try to create a “***shopping experience***”, not just a typical church bazaar.

As I have said before, I realize that all our lives are busy with many things these days but we ask you to think how you can help, no matter what size that help may be…Big or Small…There are many ways to contribute to this great event. **We need your help and support in whatever way you can contribute…**



For information or questions:

**Ph# 519-633-5606 Email: johnstone.sherry@sympatico.ca**

On **November 17th** First Church

will be **entering a float in the**

**St. Thomas Christmas Parade** (6pm start time),

immediately followed by

**Cocoa, Cookies & Caroling**

back at the Church!

**Volunteers are Needed!!**

**For the Float:** (Must be a Railway Theme)

☸Design, construction & ideas

☸Decorators on the afternoon of the parade

☸Singers to ride on float

☸Riders to wave – we’d love as many Church School Children & Youth to be on the float as possible!!

☸Parade walkers, to invite others back to church for Cocoa, Cookies & Caroling

**For the Cocoa, Cookies & Caroling**

☸Buy cookies & cocoa

☸Carol singers (make a joyful noise)

☸Clean up

☸Holly Fair Mini Bazaar Table

**If you’d like to help with any of the above tasks or have ideas, please email the church office at** [**office@1stunitedchurch.ca**](mailto:office@1stunitedchurch.ca)

**Thanks to Beamish Landscape for use of their truck, trailer and facility.**

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# Annual Hat and Mitt Run

**Our community has supported this event each and every year and we are very grateful. The event attracts runners of all ages and abilities and includes a 5 km and 10 km guided walk or run through historic St. Thomas. We encourage everyone to come and join us. This event is fun for the entire family! Please join us for a nice leisurely run or walk, a visit and, our course, treats afterwards! We are asking everyone to knit hats & mitts (or buy new) to donate to local groups in need.**

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**Date: Saturday, December 1 at 8 am**

**Where: First United Church**

**Entry Fee: Hat & Mitts for local groups in need**

For more info call or email Carolyn Johnson

519-318-3386 or [johnsongirltris@bell.net](mailto:johnsongirltris@bell.net)

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**Pageant Costumes**

will be available for you to take home

starting Sunday, December 2.

You will find them in the classroom on the

North side of the assembly hall.

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ADVENT 1 CELEBRATION!

Sunday, December 2

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**AS YOU ENTER THE SANCTUARY**

you will be offered an ornament to hang on the Christmas tree.

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**MUSIC FILLED WORSHIP**

Soloists and the Senior Choir will present Christmas music as the congregation joins in the singing of traditional Christmas carols.

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**FELLOWSHIP & FOOD WILL FOLLOW DOWNSTAIRS**

A catered meal – roast beef on a bun, salads, drinks and desserts await us in the assembly hall. The lift will be in operation and tables will be set up on the mezzanine level for those wanting to avoid the stairs in the assembly hall.

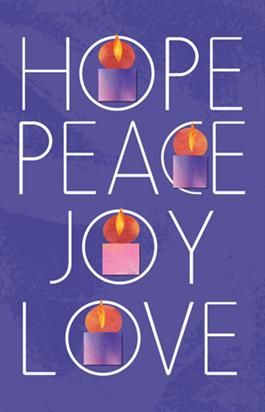
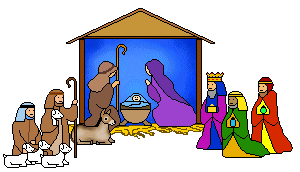
A **freewill offering** basket will be out for your contribution to the meal.

**Please contribute what you can.**

(Cost: $10.00 per adult, $5.00 per child 6 –12 years old. FREE for children 5 yrs. and under. If possible, a family of four with 2 children 6-12 yrs. would contribute $30.00)

**SPECIAL THANKS TO THE MEMBERSHIP & CD COMMITTEES**





**ADVENT & CHRISTMAS**

**SERVICES AT FIRST CHURCH**

**Sunday, December 2: Advent 1 – HOPE**

Tree Trimming / Carol Singing, Worship followed by a catered lunch.

**Sunday, December 9: Advent 2 – PEACE**

Secret Santa Bags are returned & Food Drive for Christmas Care

Visitation Sunday

**Sunday, December 16: Advent 3 – JOY**

Morning Worship @ 10:30am

**Sunday, December 23: Advent 4 – LOVE**

Morning Worship @ 10:30am

**Monday, December 24 – Christmas Eve**

**with Children’s Pageant**

Worship @ 7pm

**CHRISTMAS VISITATION – Sunday, December 9**

There are wonderful members of this church who are unable to come out to worship. Our hope is to have each one of them receive a Christmas plant and a visit from First Church. We want them to know they are not forgotten.

Would you consider delivering a plant to one of these members? Simply come up to the tables in front of the pulpit after worship, and you will be given a plant, a name and an address.

The visits are to bring happiness, Christmas joy and greetings from First Church. They do not have to be long … just cheery!

Our hope is that enough people come forward

so that each visitor only has one plant to deliver*.*

The Membership Committee

**Info About the Christmas Eve**

**Children’s Bethlehem Pageant**

**Monday, December 24, 7:00pm**

The candles are lit, the sanctuary fills and downstairs…

the ‘Bethlehem’ cast gathers.

**WHAT YOU’LL WANT TO KNOW ABOUT CHRISTMAS EVE & THE CHILDREN**

THERE ARE NO REHEARSALS - which means visiting cousins, friends and neighbours can come that night, and be a part of the Bethlehem cast. (bath robe & towel works!)

**YOU ARE WELCOME TO GET COSTUMES TO TAKE HOME!**

They will be available in the classroom on the North side of the Assembly Hall beginning Advent 1, Sunday, December 2

First come first serve for our Angel, Magi and Shepherd costumes.

**COSTUMES FOR NURSERY AGE CHILDREN WILL BE AVAILABLE AS WELL!**

Parents are invited to walk or carry their baby/toddler down the aisle Christmas Eve. We only ask that you wear a robe and towel on your head.

**THE CHILDREN ARE ASKED TO BE IN THE ASSEMBLY HALL FOR 6:40PM in FULL COSTUME.** At the appropriate time they will be lined up by our church school teachers in story order. For children who are too young or too shy to walk down the centre aisle to Bethlehem, we invite moms & dads to carry them. Please wear a bathrobe and towel for your head.



**You are invited to worship with us**

**Christmas Eve at 7pm**

☸ **Children’s Bethlehem Pageant**

☸ **Scripture Lessons**

☸ **Carols**

☸ **Special Music**

**From the Library**

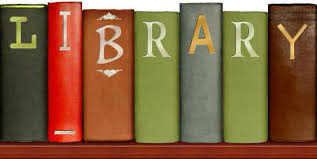
The following books are on display in the library and available for sign out.

1. **A Cup of Comfort – Big Book of Prayer**

These are real life stories of answered prayers, and meditations. It is an easy read – all the stories are just a few pages long.

1. **Passionate Vision – Discovering Canada’s National Parks** by Dr. Roberta Bondar. Photography is fantastic!
2. **Hidden Figures** by Margaret Lee Shetterly.

The true story of the black female mathematicians at Nasa whose calculations helped fuel some of America’s greatest achievements in space.



**For Children**

1. **Family Devotions – Veggie Tales**

Faith, Communication & Love

1. **Let’s Call It Canada – Stories of Canadian Place Names**

Good for families to read together. Where is Punkeydoodles or Skedaddle Ridge or Eyebrow? This can be a fun book & educational at the same time.

1. **Time For a Story – “Focus on the Family”**

Five stories to inspire children to be kind, to do good deeds, develop positive values & a loving heart. This is a beautiful little book.

1. **For All the Young Hockey Fans at Your House**

There are 8 books in this series about “Puckster” & his friends who want to start their own hockey team and then of course, they need hockey sweaters!! If your family are interested in hockey, they will enjoy these books.

Submitted by Edith Nimmo

**From the Finance Committee**

First Church Friends,

Have you ever considered giving up your offering envelopes

and going on PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance)... or donating

online through Paypal?

**PAR** is a once a month withdrawal from your bank account (around the 20th) to help support the ongoing ministry of First Church.

**Paypal** is a secure online payment service that gives you the flexibility to donate using your credit or debit card.. and there’s a link on our website!

(<http://firstunitedchurch.weebly.com/ways-to-donate.html>)

Why are we promoting these services?

Both of these options are quick, easy and they save the church money!

There are so many sets of costly envelopes that are wasted.  Either they aren’t picked up or, because we don't all get out to church each week, the remaining unused envelopes are thrown out.

With PAR & Paypal there’s no waste and no worries!   The money is automatically deducted from your account, credited to the church and you still receive your tax receipt at year end.  Both services do NOT charge you for using their systems, so there is no cost to you personally.  SO SIMPLE, SO COST EFFECTIVE!

Concerned the people around you will think you’re not giving because you’re not putting anything on the collection plate?   We have small inexpensive business-sized cards available for you (on the table in the narthex or on the sound system... or available from the church office) to put on the plate indicating you’ve given in another way.   We’ve got all the bases covered!!

If you would like to sign up for PAR (we need a form filled out - available in the church office or on our website - & a void cheque) or would like more information on either of these options, give Lori a call in the Office (519-631-7570 ext. 21) or send her an email (office@1stunitedchurch.ca).

Please remember, by signing up for any of these alternate methods of donating, you are saving our church money and contributing toward the maintenance of our Church into the future.

**FINANCIAL UPDATE – from the Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee extends our sincere thanks to everyone for their continued support of First Church.

**\*Our current financial situation (as at September 30, 2018)**

**is a net loss of $23,806.**

\*Our monthly expenses (approximately) are $22,000.

\*For the remainder of the year (October 1 – December 31) we require

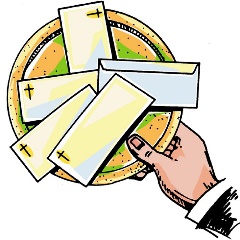
$89,806 to pay down our deficit and cover expenses.

\*We estimate that we could receive approximately $16,000 from the PAR givings, the Rummage Sale, the Holly Fair and Trustee funds for the balance of the year.

**\*We therefore project that we need to collect $73,806 in General Fund Givings by December 31, 2018 to break even for the year.**

With your continued support and generosity we will achieve our goal and meet our expenses for 2018!

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**YEAR END GIVING**

**Deadline for the 2018 tax year is**

**Monday, January 7th, 2018**

Offering envelopes will be available for pick up during the months

of November & December in the Library. Please pick yours up!

Note: All envelope boxes are set out in alphabetical order.

If a friend or neighbor is unable to pick up their envelopes, please be so kind as to drop them off for them. It would be a great help.

**WAYS TO GIVE:**

**\*OFFERING ENVELOPES:** If you currently do not use envelopes, and would like to start, please contact Lori in the Church Office (519-631-7570) and you will be assigned a set.

**\*PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance)** Once a month (on or around the 20th) automatic withdrawals directly from your bank account.

**\*ONLINE PAYPAL CONTRIBUTIONS** from your bank account or credit card can be made at any time. There is a Paypal link on our website: <http://www.1stunitedchurch.ca/ways-to-donate.html>

**\*POST DATED CHEQUES** can be left with Lori in the Church Office and she will make sure they get put in the collection when specified.

**If you have any questions, please call Lori!**

**Thank you!**

**BAPTISMS / SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING**

Callan John Underhill, Son of Chris & Laura (Snowsell),

Grandson of Mark & Vicki Snowsell.

June 10, 2018

Hazel Elizabeth Siniowski, Daughter of Adam & Ashley,

Granddaughter of Joe Hill & Carolyn LaPare.

June 10, 2018

**WEDDINGS**

Carolyn Leah Johnson & Brent Gordon Cross

May 12, 2018

Tessa Jane Parkes & Cole Gordon Fulton

July 14, 2018

Cynthia June Reimer & Michael Alan Francis Yates

August 18, 2018

Laura Anne Birchall & Jonathon Franklin James Auckland

September 1, 2018

Rachel Mary Catharine Rayner & Jeremy James Gorman

October 6, 2018

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**IN MEMORY**

We remember the family of…

Jim Rick – May 14, 2018

Gus Langley - June 12, 2018

**My first Christmas in Heaven**  
 I see the countless Christmas trees around the world below  
 With tiny lights like Heaven's stars, reflecting on the snow.  
 The sight is so spectacular, please wipe away the tear  
 For I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.  
 I hear the many Christmas songs that people hold so dear  
 But the sounds of music can't compare with the Christmas choir up here.  
 I have no words to tell you, the joy their voices bring,  
 For it is beyond description to hear the angels sing.  
 I know how much you miss me, I see the pain inside your heart.  
 But I am not so far away, We really aren't apart.  
 So be happy for me, dear ones, You know I hold you dear.  
 And be glad I'm spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.  
 I sent you each a special gift, from my heavenly home above,  
 I sent you each a memory of my undying love.  
 After all love is a gift more precious than pure gold.  
 It was always most important in the stories Jesus told.  
 Please love and keep each other, as my Father said to do.  
 For I can't count the blessing or love he has for each of you.  
 So have a Merry Christmas and wipe away that tear.  
 Remember, I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.

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Author Unknown