By Jim Langham

Assuming that Christmas really isn't past since Christ is still alive and his birth has still occurred, I want to share a recently found journal entry that is 28 years old that melted my heart to tears when I recently reread it during a time of reflection.

The entry occurred on Dec. 14, 1983. Our children were young. Julie was 8 years old, Sandi was 5 and Jason was just a few months. We cuddled into a country home in the lake-like wilderness of Branch County, Mich., a place where our children spent 11 years of their childhood as I served a small country church there.

On this particular evening, we were having a discussion with the children about what Christmas would be like without Jesus. We agreed that in today's world, we could still go on with the giving of gifts, the family feasts, the Christmas shopping sprees, the trees, the lights, the ornaments and all that Christmas had become as a festivity. Sadly, we concluded that in many places, Christmas, as known in our times, could go on even if Christ wasn't in it.

At the time, a professor of psychology in a large university asked his students to write the word "Christmas" on a piece of paper, and then then he challenged them to write as many of instant response words they could think of. Immediately, papers were filled with words such as, "tree," "holly," "mistletoe," "gifts," "turkey," "holiday," "carols" and "Santa Claus."

The journal brought back a memory to my mind of a special moment from those days. One Saturday afternoon, we had a special time representing the Christmas spirit in our place. We went to a farm and tromped through the heavy snow to pick out our tree; after a "family conference" we agreed on the tree that would become our tree that year. After that, we went to town to pick out decorations and to visit the jolly old fellow. During that visit, Jason tried to pull his beard off.

We drove home to decorate our tree and after that, we started talking about Christmas gifts.

Finally, Sandi, our “family theologian” at the time, innocently said, “I know what I’m getting Jesus for Christmas.” Wondering what answer was going to come from her non-predictable mind at the time, we all asked with interest what that gift was going to be.

“I love Him, I’m going to tell Him that I love Him,” she said.

There was a silence for a moment as all of our five family members appreciated and allowed what she had said to sink in. Then she broke the silence with a smirk on her face as she said, “I thought of that all by myself – I think I did!”

At that time, I came across a little poem, and in the spirit of what I had penned in my journal, I copied this at the bottom of my entry:

“What shall I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would give him a lamb;

If I were a wise man, I would do my part;

Yet what I can I give Him:

Give my heart.”

(From “In the Bleak Midwinter” by Christina Rossetti, 1872.)