

December is often a time of more social gatherings in the life of the church and in our worlds of work, local neighborhoods, friends, and families.

Our normal tendency is to gravitate to those we know and to include those with whom we are familiar.

Indeed much of the joy of the season is gathering with those we know and love.

At the same time, this is an ideal time to open our circles a little. Thus we enjoy the dear one and include the new one. The open heart leads to the open door.

As a matter of fact, this is often the practical key to including people who are newer to us because that very newness may make us a little uncomfortable in reaching out to them.

Invite those we don't know so well to join us with those we do know well.

Remember the two friends on the road to Emmaus? "But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them."
(Luke 24:29)

They had no idea it was Jesus, the sovereign Lord of the universe. Secure in their relationship, the two friends who knew each other well invited the one they didn't know so well.

It only changed their lives.

With joy – E. Stanley Ott, December 13, 2011 Vol. 10, No. 28, *OPEN HEART, OPEN DOOR*

Prayer Suggestions

- Since you invited Jesus into your heart, how has He changed *your* life? Thank Him. With whom is the Holy Spirit nudging you to share Jesus?
- As you take time to be alone with God during Advent, ponder the Gift of all gifts you have received from Him, and remember the words of Luke 12:48 – "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." What is the Lord asking *of you* this special season?
- Emmanuel – "God *with* us" ... We are no longer alone. Who will spend Christmas alone if you do not include him/her? Whom is He inviting you to invite into your heart, your church, your home this special season?
- Scripture tells us that, following their journey to find the Savior in a manger, the "shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen..." First century shepherds were common folk, uncultured, kind of rough-around-the-edges folks and often shunned by others. Perhaps you are aware of someone living on the 'edges of society' and shunned by others. Will you invite him/her to worship with you and/or share a meal with you this season?
- As you prepare to pray for those for whom we are concerned, please take a few minutes to open our *Celebration Hymnal* to #478 and read or sing through the words to the hymn, *Have You Any Room for Jesus?*