THE IMAGE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

The Gospel of Luke presents the parable of the Great Banquet. Jesus tells of a master who prepared a great banquet and invited many guests, saying "Come, for everything is now ready." After so many excuses for not attending by his invited guests, the master became angry and ordered his servants: "Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."

After this had been done and still room remained, the master told his servant: "Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full." Then, as additional invitations were given, the banquet was presented to his guests. The result of the master's invitation was to feast and fellowship at a banquet given by God. (Luke 14:15-24)

WHAT IS THE GREAT BANQUET?

The parable above provides the picture for the Great Banquet. Like its counterparts, Cursillo, Emmaus, and Tres Dias, this movement examines Christianity as a life-style. The Great Banquet is an orderly, structured weekend designed to strengthen and renew the faith of Christians. Through a combined effort of laity and clergy, the Great Banquet focuses on the renewal of the church.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE GREAT BANQUET?

The Great Banquet is a 72-hour experience, beginning on Thursday evening and ending Sunday evening. For three days, guest s live and study together in a worshipful time of singing, prayer and discussion.

During each of the fifteen talks given by laity and clergy, the theme of God's grace is presented. Guests participate in the daily celebration of Holy Communion and examine more fully the presence of Christ in His body of believers. They personally experience His grace through the prayers and acts of a loving, Christian support community.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE GREAT BANQUET?

One of the most important parts of the Great Banquet is the follow-up. Although the weekend lasts only three days, guests are invited to use its lessons for the rest of their lives. After attending the Great Banquet, they are challenged to:

- Strengthen their own spiritual life through study and active congregational participation; and
- Strive to become active disciples of Jesus Christ in the world through their church.

To assist them in their discipleship, the Great Banquet offers specific opportunities. First, reunion groups of three to five people meet weekly to examine their goals of spiritual growth and to encourage one another to a life of discipleship. Second, there will be opportunities to assist in future Great Banquet weekends through prayer, support and team involvement. Third, guests are made aware of community needs through a newsletter of other Great Banquet weekends, both locally and regionally.

HISTORY OF THE GREAT BANQUET

To become familiar with the Great Banquet, let's look first at the history of its counterparts, the Cursillo and the Walk to Emmaus. The Cursillo (3-day course in Christianity) began in Spain in the 1940's in the Catholic Church. It spread to the United States and evolved for Protestants into the Walk to Emmaus under the auspices of the Upper Room and the United Methodist Church.

An Emmaus Movement was started by the First Presbyterian Church in Madisonville, Kentucky in 1982. After a 10-year history of the Walk to Emmaus in Madisonville, the Great Banquet was formed. Governed by an ecumenical board of directors and using the "Cursillo model", but with a different image, the Great Banquet continues to emphasize personal Christian discipleship. Lampstand Ministries was formed in 1992 as a covering corporation to establish Great Banquet Communities nationwide. Rev. John E. Pitzer serves as the National Director of the Great Banquet Movement and president of Lampstand Ministries.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE GREAT BANQUET?

This weekend experience is for anyone who:

- Wishes to strengthen his or her spiritual life;
- Wants to have a better understanding of prayer, the sacraments, study, and Christian action;
- Strives to live a Christian life that bears fruit for God;
- Seeks to know Jesus as Savior and Lord and to make Him known.

YOU ARE INVITED

You are invited to be a guest at the Great Banquet given by God, and to feast in His goodness and love.