

GREAT BANQUET BELIEFS

"...Come, for all is now ready." - Luke 14:17

1. There is one God, infinite and eternal, who exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. John 1:1-4, 4:24
2. The Bible is God's written self-expression. The Holy Spirit guided diverse human authors to write in such a way that their words were kept from error, and to convey with authority the unchanging desires of God. 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17
3. By God's command the cosmos was created. God takes delight in the universe and in human beings, who were uniquely created to bear God's image. Genesis 1:1, 26-28
4. By willfully disobeying God's commandments the entire human race fell, thereby surrendering the privilege of being in relationship with God. Every human is born unable to meet God's holy requirements, and thus is deserving of God's condemnation. Romans 3:23, 6:23
5. What we are powerless to do for ourselves, Jesus Christ, God the Son, accomplished on our behalf. Jesus lived a sinless human life, then accepted the ultimate punishment for our sins through His death on the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:20, 1 Peter 3:18
6. We may receive the gift of a restored and eternal relationship with God by trusting the finished work of Christ on our behalf. God's gift is provided by grace alone and is received by faith alone. What results is an entirely new life that is pleasing to God. John 1:11-12, 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:17
7. The true church is the invisible, gathered group (on earth and in heaven) of those who trust Christ, and is not to be finally identified with any earthly organization. Every local church, by the Holy Spirit, is called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. Acts 2:38-47, Hebrews 10:24,25
8. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which were commanded by Christ to be an ongoing part of the Church's life, are the two sacraments we practice. Acts 16:31, 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26
9. We affirm the historic confessions of the Reformed faith to be a reliable exposition of what God leads us to believe and to do as revealed in God's Word. See the Book of Confessions
10. As a congregation we are called together to make disciples and release them for service in our broken world. This is our ongoing mission. Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8
11. Discipleship is a commitment of the whole self to God and is lived out by growing in all Six Marks of the Disciple:
 - a. A heart for Christ alone - Matthew 6:23
 - b. A mind transformed by the word - Romans 12:2
 - c. Arms of love - John 13:35
 - d. Knees for prayer - Philippians 4: 6, 7
 - e. A voice to speak the good news - 1 Peter 3:15
 - f. A spirit of servanthood and stewardship -8 Mark 10:45
12. Jesus will return at the end of history, at which time all of God's people will be brought into God's presence, humanity will be judged, and the earth will be fully redeemed. John 14:16, Revelation 21:1-7, 22:20

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 in 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. The fall of 1992 marked the first Zionsville Great Banquet.

Purpose of the Great Banquet

The focus of the Great Banquet is to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to make Him known. The objective of the Great Banquet is to continue the 3-day weekend by serving Christ in local churches, homes and workplaces. To live a life of grace and to respond to higher levels of Christian discipleship becomes the purpose of the Great Banquet.

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 all 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 room still remained, the master told his servants "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 results of the master's invitation were to feast and fellowship at a banquet given by God. (Luke 14: 15-24).

The parable above provides a picture for the Great Banquet. Like its counterparts, Cursillo, Walk to Emmaus and Tres Dias, this movement examines Christianity as a lifestyle. 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 on Sunday evening. For three days guests 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 guests are challenged to:

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

To assist in this discipleship, the Great Banquet offers specific opportunities. First, guests are encouraged to join reunion groups or small groups and/or continue growing with a spiritual mentor. 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 Banquets through prayer, support and team involvement. Third, guests are made aware of other needs through community participation, gatherings and correspondence. Great Banquet communities exist in a variety of locations around the US and even globally. A current list of Great Banquet communities can be found at www.lampstand.net/all-communities/.