

South Boston church spreading the love with project



Written by Tiffany Hudson in The Gazette Virginian Newspaper

The Rev. Russell Lee, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, came up with an idea to make God’s love visible to the community by placing this 200-pound LOVE sign in prominent places around South Boston. (Doug Ford/Gazette-Virginian)

What’s with the love sculpture? The three-foot tall white sculpture is part of a three-month mission project recently started by First Presbyterian Church.

It all began when Rev. Russell Lee came up with an idea to make God’s love visible to the community. He took the idea to the elders of the church, and they discussed and approved the idea.

Sam Lewis began making the design, while Jim Luedtke and Lee cut the boards to be used in constructing the love sculpture.

“I’m always looking for ways to reach out to the community,” said Lee.

The men originally wanted to go with a design close to that of the famous “I love New York” sculpture but said those were too ornate.

“The love of God is simple and life-changing, so that is how we constructed the letters,” said Lee.

So the letters stand three-feet tall and are 12 inches wide, and the sign weighs close to 200 pounds.

The group chose to paint the sculpture white, so it would be visible and catch the attention of drivers at night, and a group of men from the church helped paint the sculpture.

“It catches your attention at night. The closer you get, the brighter it gets, just like God’s love — the closer you get to Him, the brighter and more wonderful His love is,” said Lee.

After its construction, the first Sunday in August Lee placed the four letters of love separated in different parts of the church and one by one brought them together describing a meaning for each letter.

The congregation held a dedication over the mission project, and the sculpture was placed in the yard of its first resting place on Aug. 8.

The sculpture will be placed in the yards of church members for about a week or places where it is most visible with the heaviest traffic.

The first week it was placed in the yard of Sam and Kay Lewis on Halifax Road.

“The second day it was in my yard, I went to the mailbox, and I had a young mother with her child who pulled into the driveway and asked my permission to take a picture with the sign.

“The young mother said, ‘I just love the sign,’ and she didn’t even know that she was receiving a blessing by seeing the sign. It’s like a subliminal message,” said Lewis.

Lee and Lewis said the church plans to continue the mission project in the coming months.

The word for August is “love,” but September and October have separate words planned for them. In the month of September, the word is “hope” and in the month of October, the word is “faith.”

They chose to begin with love because God begins with love. Lee referred to John 3:16 saying after love follows faith and hope. They also plan to bring all of the words together in November for a celebration. If the mission project goes as planned, they hope to continue with more words.

“We hope the words will be used again, beyond what we’re using them for,” said Lee.

Lee and Lewis both said they have not received any negative feedback from the love sculpture and have heard only positive things.

“What can you say bad about love?” said Lee.

“Love can feed the hungry, love can bridge gaps, love can bring purpose to a life which had no meaning before,” he added.

Lee and First Presbyterian congregation are hoping through this three-month mission project, which began with the word love, that they will challenge their members as well as other churches.

It will provide opportunities to have conversations about God’s love and provide a positive change in the community, Lee said.

This sculpture could be about any kind of love. Brotherly love, romantic love, love for children or parents, love for animals, love for country or military. Ultimately, as one of our church members once said, it is all about God’s love for us,” Lee said