

# A concrete way of sharing love

by Walt Wiltschek

**S**ometimes the best ideas don't require a lot of work—just a spark of creativity.

When deacons at York (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren decided not to hold their regular love feast on World Communion Sunday this year due to pandemic concerns, they made alternate plans as best they could. Rather than doing footwashing and a meal, they would simply do communion during worship instead.

Then deacon Diane Gibble had an idea. She contacted pastor Joel Gibbel

and wondered if they might not find another way to express some love instead.

“She got in touch with me and said, ‘We’re called to be Jesus in the neighborhood, so let’s go outdoors and do some sidewalk art. It could be inspiring and a welcoming message to our neighbors and express our faith publicly, and the kids will have fun with it. Maybe we should do that!’”

Gibbel quickly agreed, and a new plan went into motion.

“Out of the disappointment of not doing love feast came a new idea,”



Gibbel said. “We just put a little invitation in the weekly newsletter and said, ‘Hey everyone! After worship stick around if you want for some sidewalk chalk art. Come and join us.’ It all happened within a couple of days.”

So that’s what they did. When Oct. 3 came around, about two dozen people—mostly families with children—followed up worship with some art time and fellowship. The church sits on a large corner lot in a residential neighborhood, so there was plenty of concrete to cover over the course of the hour.

“We did probably 200 feet of sidewalk with writing and images and pictures: Faith and hope and love and ‘Jesus loves you and so do we,’ and things like that,” Gibbel said. “We all knew that it wasn’t just something we were doing at that moment, but that the messages would stick around all day long or more. A lot of people in the neighborhood walk their dogs and travel past there. Anyone going by was going to see this, and that was probably the neatest thing. The message was going to keep on speaking.”

He was surprised by the amount of buzz the event generated, with people commenting on the congregation’s Facebook post from spots around the country and picking up on the idea.

“To me, it was a small thing that we did, and it became this cascade of public reception for it,” Gibbel said. “I’m glad we were able to share it, and it became a little bit contagious.” 

