

I want to set the mood for today's service with a story.

Life is full of surprises with many moments of joy and pain as we all continue to live our humanity in God's beautiful and anguished world.

You see before you a broken vessel, Emmanuel's baptismal font.

It all started about two months ago in Epiphany season, on January 16th.

We prepared ourselves as usual by praying, but in the vestry instead of the prayer room.

It was a busy day and we were frenzied. There was no time to sign out the key.

So we squeezed into the messy vestry. Crammed full of the symbols of our common life.

We breathed. We prayed. We asked the Holy Spirit to infuse our worship with palpable pneuma, with energy and drive to carry us forward.

Susan Beaver was our guest preacher.

From a place of utter and open vulnerability she gave us a glimpse into her life, her witness with her people, the Indigenous Peoples of the Six Nations reserve, and her journey through sickness, grief, and struggle, and...towards healing.

She talked about her brokenness and ours. She said "we are empty vessels, broken vessels, ready to be filled with God's love."

And she assured us that God loves us all, each and everyone of us.

Michelle Voss Roberts presided at table and the service ended. We lingered, soaking in the nourishment of our shared spirit-filled time together.

We gathered up the hymnals, put away the chalices and plates, and reorganized the chairs.

Life's hustle and bustle began to creep back in.

The font was carried back into the vestry.

Then it happened. No-one was in the room at the time. But those who were still in the chapel heard the noise, the awful crash. There was the baptismal font, on the floor, symbol of our common life and faith, shattered.

As so we gathered up the pieces, lovingly and tenderly, the pieces you see before you. On this Ash Wednesday, as we reflect on the brokenness of the world the brokenness of our lives, as we remember how we hurt one another, I recall Susan's words and suggest to you the love of God through the action of the Holy Spirit stitches us up and binds us together. God's love is the glue that holds us together.

Let us take a moment of silence now as we prepare ourselves for worship.