

Welcome and Land Acknowledgment

Rev. Fred Small

Welcome to *Love. Earth. Justice!*

Welcome to those gathered here at Old South Church in Boston and to those around the world joining us by livestream.

Here in this magnificent sanctuary, we acknowledge that we are on Indigenous land, the ancestral and unceded land of the Massachusetts people—the original stewards of this territory who retain enduring and unalienable rights.

We acknowledge that this city and this nation were built on the trauma of violent conquest, racism, and oppression, often abetted by religious authority. We vow to oppose these evils and to promote healing, love, and justice.

We gather this afternoon as people of many faiths: some of great faith, some of little faith, some—I ’m sure—of no faith at all. And who could blame you?

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There is so much suffering in the world today and so much more to come.

But as Thich Nhat Hanh, the Zen master and peace activist, has said, “Suffering is not enough. Life is filled with suffering,” he says, “but it is also filled with many wonders, like the blue sky, the sunshine, the eyes of a baby. To suffer is not enough. We must also be in touch with the wonders of life. They are within us and all around us, everywhere, any time.”

And so today we mourn the suffering, the loss of things and places and beings precious and irreplaceable.

We celebrate the wonders all around us, which some of us call God’s creation.

And we rededicate ourselves—we consecrate our lives—to restoring balance, to healing injury, to caring for one another, to embodying compassion, to demanding justice.

And so we pray. And so we act. And so we mobilize.

May it be so.