

Go Fly a Kite

a sermon by Rev. Lia Scholl

John 3:8 in the New Revised Standard Version reads like this:

The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

As many of you know who speak different languages or have studied ancient languages it's hard often to find a good translation—and as hard as this one tries—this translation is incomplete.

The word that is translated as wind is *pneuma* in Koine Greek. Can you say it with me? **Pneuma**. You hear a word from our own language in that? Maybe you hear pneumonia, pneumatic, pneumothorax. The prefix pneumo in English is defined as air, lungs, or respiration.

Pneuma in Greek can be translated a movement of air, or a gentle blast; either movement of air in the nostrils and mouth, or breath. It has as an undertone of livegiving, because breath is life, right?

Pneuma can be a benevolent or maleficent spirit—demon or angel.

Pneuma can be the spirit, the vital principle by which the body is animated, the rational spirit, the power by which a human feels, thinks or decides. It can be the soul.

And *pneuma* can be God—part of the Trinity, occasionally referred to in a way which emphasizes the Spirit's nature—the **Holy** Spirit, and sometimes called a name which emphasizes her work and power: the Spirit of **Truth**.

So the verse could read:

The wind blows where it chooses
The breath blows where it chooses
The soul blows where it chooses
The Holy Spirit blows where she chooses

My breath, the wind, my spirit and the Spirit were on my mind during my vacation.

My breath was on my mind because I was working on becoming more centered, less anxious, and to actually relax.

My spirit was on my mind because I have been at this work—being your Pastor—for five years as of this month. And there are milestones and successes and failures to consider, It was a sort of check-in with my spirit.

And the wind was on my mind because I learned to fly a kite. A kite, as you know, is a toy consisting of a light frame with material stretched over it, following the wind at the end of a long string. And flying a kite is all about accepting that the wind blows, and we don't control it.

A kite has two parts in constant tension: a part that catches the wind, and a part that submits to the pull of the string. (radio-assets.bravehearted.com)

Both parts of the kite are desperately needed. If the kite doesn't catch the wind, it lies on the ground. If a kite it doesn't heed the restraint of the string, it is lost in the wind.

And the Spirit was on my mind because I am sure that the Spirit called me to this place. And that this same Spirit is not done with me here, yet.

I need you to know that several things came clear to me.

I need you to know that I cannot save this church. I never could, and I never will. David Hirano said to me recently a thing he always told the churches he served, "This is your church, not mine. What happens here is up to you, not me. I am a steward for a time."

That leads me to the second point: I am going be more honest, more straightforward, and maybe more blunt. I have spent a lot of time, energy, and effort working in the church, but real revival, real change, can't come from me. I can walk alongside you, I can make suggestions, I can try to lead, but I can't make you follow. When I create programming, in order for it take root, to make change, you have to participate. When the staff creates opportunities for service and worship, if you do not participate, we will not grow.

We can no longer afford to support the idea that we are a medium sized congregation, that we are a church with status, that we are important to this campus. Living into that illusion takes too much money and too much time and too much energy—and no one here has that much money, time, or energy.

We have a lot of work to do in this congregation, and we haven't got time to listen to empty criticism anymore. From here on out, if you want to complain about something, please, be prepared to suggest a plan to fix what you do not like.

And finally, we can no longer afford to do what other dying churches around us are doing—insisting that we want to grow, but that we don't want to change. Let me put it like this. When the Spirit picks up our kite, we have to be ready to follow, and if we are tethered too tightly to the past, too tightly to control, too tightly to conflict, we will not survive.

I believe that THE Spirit has a plan for this community. But if we are too enamored with the string, too tied to the past and the ground, we will never rise to the Spirit's call.

So... Will you go fly a kite?