

# *The Spirit of Pentecost*

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams on Pentecost Sunday, May 31st, 2020 at Footscray Baptist Church)*

Pentecost, the birthday of the Church.

A day the small but growing community of faith experienced the very presence of God in their midst in a new way.

A day in which many in a real way understood the message of love in ways they could understand.

Despite the chaos, bewilderment, amazement and even the accusation of drunkenness or insanity, thousands of people heard the message of God's love in ways they could understand, and no one was excluded!

The church and the scriptures are full of symbols and images of the Spirit.

In our service today, through the prayers, the songs, the readings we have encountered some of them. That there are so many ways of describing and understanding how the Spirit works in the community of faith, underlines her elusive presence with us, underlines the myriad ways in which God comes to us and is with us.

Our readings today describe God as Spirit as creative, unifying, forgiving. God as Spirit is a source of hope, of peace and of truth.

Like wind that blows who knows where.

Like fire that warms and refines.

God as Spirit gifts each one of us with abilities to build up the community, gifts to use for the common good.

God as Spirit enables all in the world – whoever they are, wherever they are, wherever they are from – to understand God's love for them and the entire world.

How do you see God as Spirit acting in your life?

Where is God as Spirit acting in the life of the church, this church?

How and where is God's Spirit in the life of the world?

To where and what is God's Spirit calling us?

Creative, life-giving, close yet elusive, working in, through and beyond us.

I want to conclude by reading a reflection by William Loader (one of my favourite Australian theologians).

I hope you might find something here to pond on this Pentecost Sunday.

## **Wind, wind - a reflection on the Spirit by Bill Loader**

Wind, wind,  
you come from nothingness and go to nothingness,  
and when you are still,

there is nothing we see, nothing we hear,  
and you surround us in our not seeing and not knowing.

Wild, wild wind,  
you whip the seas, whirling great water spouts and fountains,  
crashing on the foamed edges of the shore,  
sweeping the unsuspecting fisherman from the slippery rocks,  
terrifying force, uncontrollable, beyond our power.

O wind, piercing wind,  
driving the blizzard, the sleet, the rain,  
trampling earth with wild tempests and tantrums  
that uproot trees, unroof houses and wreak devastation in your path.

Wind, wind, wondrous wind,  
hovering at the birth of creation,  
whisking secretly among the wonders of new life,  
bearing the seed, lifting high the heads of mighty trees,  
swirling among the grasses, celebrating life.

Wind, wind, we know your ways,  
we trace your web on the map of highs and lows,  
today's weather, tomorrow's predictions,  
depressions and sea breezes,  
we harness your power,  
our weather cocks point to you,  
a cross shows where you have been  
and we do not know.

O wind, O silent wind,  
where do you go?  
Do you go away and play,  
in outback gorges or bare mountains of the desert,  
stirring small clouds of red dust among the bushes,  
kissing the rippled smile of the billabong,  
running down the slopes, exulting at the rock face,  
passing by the mountain with none to see  
and none to know your trail.

Wind, gentle wind,  
wind of our breathing, our life, our hope,  
renewing, refreshing,  
sighing in our stress,  
moaning in our pain,  
still in our dying.

O wind, wind,  
you breathed upon the clay and there was life,  
you danced down to the forehead of a Galilean  
and there was hope,

you shook the foundations of community  
and there was Pentecost.

Wind of nothingness and awe,  
wind of knowing and unknowing,  
wind of bearing and begetting,  
wind of secrets and mystery,  
O wise, wise wind,  
whisper to us your grace.