

## Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of

The Winnipeg General Strike: May 15 – June 25, 1919

*Updated Aug. 19 with new sermons and a prayer – in time for Labour Day*



Strike!Red09: The Strikers' Chorus in the 2009 annual production in Winnipeg.  
Photo by Andrew Sikorsky

Unifor Unifaith Community Chapter gathers active, non-working and retired employees of the United Church of Canada and their families for their mutual benefit. Unifaith is a community chapter of Unifor, Canada's largest private-sector union, with which it shares a commitment to social justice.

This resource connects worshipping communities with a formative episode in Canadian church and labour history, the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. It is offered in the spirit of solidarity—between workers and churches, men and women, and all parts of Canada and the world, where labour rights are still so needed by so many.

Faith communities may wish to use these labour-themed resources on one or more of the Sundays of the historical duration of the Strike, or at other times of the year when workers are being remembered and connections being made with the work of the Holy One, such as Labour Sunday (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of September), or the Sunday closest to May 1, International Workers' Day. April 28, the National Day of Mourning, brings people together to honour those who lost their lives, suffered injury or became disabled on the job.

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**This resource contains historical, liturgical, arts and current affairs material.**

- **Liturgical material** celebrating the connections between labour issues and the Gospel includes:  
lectionary readings and interpretative points for Sunday, May 26, 2019 (Easter 6), June 2 (Easter 7), June 9 (Pentecost), June 16 (Trinity Sunday) and September 1 (Labour Sunday).  
prayers and responsive readings

## *An Offering to the Churches by Unifor Unifaith Community Chapter*

theological and other sermon points

list of hymn suggestions, and one work-themed hymn, and a new hymn commemorating the Strike

suggestions for special free will offering

- **Short history**

of the involvement of Christian leaders in the General Strike, and synopsis of Social Reconstruction, the post-World War 1 vision of activists and progressives

- **Print, video and online resource suggestions**

labour films

books about the Winnipeg General Strike

urgent action labour sites (to build resistance to unfair, dangerous or exploitive employment practices)

labour heroes & martyrs

### Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike ©

- **Notes on Liturgical material**

- While this material has been written with the Easter 6 readings in mind, individual items may be used on other Sundays to facilitate local priorities.

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- For more on the Strike, please visit Unifaith at [unifaith.ca](http://unifaith.ca) or call 416-840-3211.

- Other Sundays or dates during the year to focus on workers and labour issues:

- April 29 (National Day of Mourning to honour those who lost their lives, suffered injury or became disabled on the job)

- May 1 (International Workers' Day)

- First Sunday of September (the day before Labour Day in Canada and some other countries)

## LITURGICAL, HYMN/MUSIC AND STUDY RESOURCES

*with original material by Brian McIntosh & barb janes*

### Liturgical material

#### Calls to Worship:

Mind the gap.

Mind the gap

**between the haves and have-nots.**

Mind the gap

**between charity and justice.**

Mind the gap

**between food banks and food security.**

Mind the gap.

**Let there be life *before* death.**

**Let there be the peace that comes with justice.** (barb janes)

(Call referencing Psalm 67, Acts 16: 9-15)

One: We gather to be glad, sing for joy, and praise God,  
for God judges people with equity and is gracious.

**All: We gather to learn of God's ways upon Earth,  
that in our life and labour we may be blessed.**

One: We gather remembering Paul's vision and dream,

to proclaim good news in the heart of empire.  
All: We gather as worshippers, as Lydia did,  
opening our hearts, listening eagerly, ready for God's reign. (Brian McIntosh)

**Opening Prayers:**

(Prayer referencing Rev. 21: 10, 22 – 22: 5 and John 14: 23-29)  
Gracious God of higher ground and holy cities,  
in this Easter season you long to raise us up with Christ  
and labour to bear fruit for the healing of the nations.  
You give us the Spirit to remind us of Jesus' teachings,  
the Advocate who is with us in our struggles  
for justice, equality and right relations.  
In this time of worship may we get carried up and away  
by your Word of life, led to work for your will and your ways  
as we praise you all our days, in and through Jesus, the Christ. Amen. (Brian McIntosh)

As we worship, O God,  
**help us remember the sacred stories of scripture,  
stories that shape us.**  
As we worship, O God,  
**help us remember history.  
May history prompt us to think about today,  
as well as the past.**  
As we worship, O God,  
**may we be en-couraged,  
may we be en-boldened.  
may we take what has been dis-membered,  
and re-member.** (barb janes)

**Confession / Assurance of Grace:**

When we have not been angered at injustice,  
**forgive us.**  
When we have dismissed high hopes as youthful naiveté,  
**forgive us.**  
When women have led the way, and we have not followed,  
**forgive us.**  
When powers and principalities have "othered" new-comers,  
when powers and principalities have been successful in dividing us,  
**forgive us.**  
When an injury to one has not been seen as an injury to all,  
**forgive us.**  
When we pray, "thy kingdom come" and don't really mean it,  
**forgive us.**  
Hear us now, as in the silence of our hearts,  
we name all we let separate us from our neighbour... (barb janes)

*An Offering to the Churches by Unifor Unifaith Community Chapter*

(Prayer referencing Acts 16: 9-15 and John 5: 1-9)

(May be said in unison or responsively.)

God of grace and blessing, we confess:  
our penchant for forgetting our common stewardship  
of your good news in the midst of empire;  
our reluctance to labour to help others;  
our habit of always seeking to get ahead,  
to go ahead of others;  
our inability to take up the cause of our own healing;  
our lack of commitment to walk with you toward justice.  
May we not just confess before you,  
but profess before others your desire to help, heal,  
and hold us in the labour of your indiscriminate love.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. (Brian McIntosh)

Assurance of Pardon (referencing Psalm 67 and Acts 16: 9-15)

God is gracious and quick to bless, making us glad  
and causing us to sing for joy at our forgiveness.  
God judges us with equity and mercy,  
and grants us a vision that includes our redemption in empire.  
So let us praise God for this sure pardon,  
and change our ways to yield an increase in hope. (Brian McIntosh)

**Litanies:**

Litany of Liberation

(North and South denote sides of congregation)

Voice 1: Our ancestors in faith  
began the process of liberation  
when they stopped *asking* to be freed,  
and began *demanding* it.  
Voice 2: In every freedom struggle,  
everywhere and everywhere,  
God is with us, yearning for justice.  
North: Let my people go!  
South: Liberte, égalité, fraternité!  
North: Give me liberty, or give me death!  
South: I have a dream: we shall overcome!  
North: The people, united, will never be defeated!  
Choir: What do we want?  
All: Peace!  
Choir: When do we want it?  
All: Now!  
North: Bread, not bombs! Bread, not bombs!  
South: Power to the people!  
North: Votes for women!  
South: Get your laws off my body!

*An Offering to the Churches by Unifor Unifaith Community Chapter*

North: Workers of the world, unite!

All: Let my people go!

*silence* -

Voice 1: In the very roots of our faith,  
of Jesus' faith, is the struggle for justice.

Voice 2: Just as God was with Moses, as he demanded freedom,  
just as God parted the Red Sea,

Voice 1: Just as God was with Jesus  
as he turned the tables,

Voice 2: So God is with us,  
active in our struggles for justice.

(by Barb Janes, published in Keri K. Wehlander (ed.)

*Courage for Hallelujahs*, United Church Publishing House)

"Labour That Enlivens" litany

One: Creator God, we are grateful this day  
for labour that enlivens and sustains;

**All: For work that satisfies and resonates  
with your labour in creation.**

One: We pray for those who have no work,  
who have too much or too little work;

**All: We pray for those in work that demeans or degrades,  
or work that profits only the few at the expense of the many.**

One: Holy Healer, in all types and places of work,  
extend your good purposes and graceful promises.

**All: We commit to making all workplaces safe,  
and creating respectful relations among those who labour.**

One: We commit to work that promotes justice,  
protects the common good, reduces the wage gap.

**All: We affirm the rights of all to work that fulfills,  
to just wages, to strike for fair benefits and conditions.**

One: We affirm that the justice-seeking power of the gospel  
is as relevant in workplaces as it is in sanctuaries.

**All: God who labours in solidarity with us,  
we hope for the world of labour to be so transformed.**

(Brian McIntosh, based on A Labour Day Litany

by Ken Sehested, [prayerandpolitics.org](http://prayerandpolitics.org))

**Offering:**

Invitation (referencing John 14: 23-29)

The Spirit Advocate reminds us of Jesus' teachings,  
urging us to labour on for God's reign of justice and peace.

Let us then offer our hearts, minds and money to this good work.

The offering of our lives will now be received. (Brian McIntosh)

Offering Prayer (referencing John 14: 23-29)

O God, for your witness and teachings in Christ Jesus

to share our bounty with others, we give you thanks.  
For your Advocate's prodding to both give and offer  
the labour of our hearts and hands, we are grateful.  
Alongside the persistent truth of your suffering solidarity,  
with workers of all kinds and classes, and all in need,  
we are not only reminded, but both remember and rejoice,  
praying in Christ's name. Amen. (Brian McIntosh)

*Suggestions for free will offering*

Have a social justice-minded group or person in your congregation research organizations helping active or injured workers (in Canada or elsewhere), or unemployed people. Contact a nearby union local for ideas.

**Prayers of the People:**

As we remember history, O God,  
may we be prompted to think about today,  
**and hear your call to build a better tomorrow.**  
From the "hello girls" of the Salter Street telephone exchange,  
who urged the next shift not to go to work,  
but to join the strike four hours early,  
**may we learn from these 500 women**  
**there is no time like the present:**  
**the struggle for justice cannot wait.**  
From the returning World War I veterans,  
who risked their lives for a better world  
and came home to find their families hungry,  
who marched down the streets of the profiteers,  
**may we, too, speak truth to power,**  
**and sing the songs of justice.**  
*From Helen Armstrong and William Ivens and J.S. Woodsworth,*

**may we learn to put our beliefs into action**  
In a time when it was difficult not to be English,  
in a time when Indigenous and Metis peoples  
were shoved to the margins of history,  
in a time of fear of those labelled "foreign",  
**may we, like the Winnipeg strikers of 1919,**  
**make common cause for justice,**  
**and call each other sister, brother.**  
In a world that would divide us,  
**may we bear each other's burdens and know**  
**an injury to one injures us all.**  
This we pray in the name of Jesus  
who turned the tables,  
and taught us to pray, saying:

Our Father and Mother

who is in us here on earth,  
holy is your name  
in the hungry  
who share their bread and their song.  
Your Kingdom come,  
which is a generous land  
flowing with milk and honey.  
Let us do your will,  
standing up when all are sitting down,  
and raising our voice  
when all are silent.  
You are giving us our daily bread  
in the song of the bird and the miracle of the corn.  
Forgive us  
for keeping silent in the face of injustice,  
and for burying our dreams;  
for not sharing bread and wine,  
love and the land,  
among us, now.  
Don't let us fall into the temptation  
of shutting the door through fear,  
of resigning ourselves to hunger and injustice,  
of taking up the same arms as the enemy.  
But deliver us from evil.  
Give us the perseverance and the solidarity  
to look for love,  
even if the path has not yet been trodden,  
even if we fail;  
so we shall have known your Kingdom  
which is being built forever and ever.  
Amen.

(Prayer by barb janes. Liberation Theology Lord's prayer from  
<http://shewhoseeks.blogspot.com/2009/03/lords-prayer-liberation-theology.html>, unattributed)

**Commissioning and Benediction:**

Go now to be Easter people, rising to the higher ground of justice,  
and go with the grace and solidarity of God our Maker,  
Christ our Co-Worker, and the Spirit our Companion,  
now and forever. Amen. (Brian McIntosh)

Our time of worship is over.  
**Our time of service begins.**  
**We go from this place**  
**to love and serve others,**  
**to seek justice and resist evil,**  
**knowing we are not alone.** (barb janes)

The Spirit of God is upon you and has anointed you.  
You are the salt of the earth and you bring light to the world.

You are not too young or too old,  
you are not too rich or too needy  
to bring good news to the impoverished,  
to give a hand to the broken-hearted,  
and to live out freedom and pardon  
through the gifts you have been given.

So remember to pack peace in your toolbox,  
hope in your briefcase,  
love in your lunch box,  
and may integrity, honesty, and joy be your designer wear of choice.

Do not be frightened, for you are never alone.  
The God in whose image you are made  
will walk with you and guide you today, tomorrow, and every day. (Connie Epp)

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### **Hymn suggestions, including two new hymns**

#### **O God our Creator, You Work Every Day**

Tune: St. Denio    Metre: 11 11 11 11

O God our Creator, you work every day:  
A potter, you form us – your people – like clay.

....

© 2000 Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

[https://www.carolynshymns.com/o\\_god\\_our\\_creator\\_you\\_work\\_every\\_day.html](https://www.carolynshymns.com/o_god_our_creator_you_work_every_day.html)

*follow this link for notes on permission to use*

#### **God Who Laboured in Creation**

Theme: divine and human labour

100th Anniversary of 1919 Winnipeg Strike

Metre: 8 7 8 7 D

Tune: Hyfrydol (“Love Divine”)

God who laboured in creation,  
who gave birth to time and space,  
hurtling earth into position,  
granting humans breath and race:  
You give people rights in common  
with inherent dignity;  
we fall short of your first vision,  
mock your solidarity.

God who hears creation's groaning,  
who still suffers labour pains,  
who sees income gaps outgrowing  
your hope for collective gains:  
You are Three-In-One, a union,  
undivided pow'r divine;  
help us end discrimination,  
our equality refine.

God who's laboured long beside us,  
for all time, a cent'ry, more,  
as our social beacon, compass,  
your lifeblood, with ours, outpoured:  
You seek justice, fairness, caring  
for "Hello girls"\* and #MeToo,  
so we strike forth, suffrage sharing,  
keeping roses, bread in view.

God who labours still, not vainly,  
who, with Easter, gives new life,  
who wants job and workplace safety,  
longs to end all needless strife:  
You give rise to our own labours,  
bold 'gainst binding pow'rs-that-be,  
waging worker rights with neighbours;  
holding hands we'll soon be free!

*\* A reference to the Winnipeg female telephone operators who were the first to strike in May, 1919*  
© 2019 Brian McIntosh

**Voices United:**

707 - For the Faithful  
690 - From the Slave Pens of the Delta  
709 - O Holy City, Seen of John  
421 - Lead On, O Cloud of Presence  
601 - The Church of Christ In Every Age  
696 - Homeless People, Will You Listen  
227 - For the Fruit of All Creation  
713 - I See A New Heaven  
695 - God is Passionate Life

**More Voices:**

78 - God Weeps  
127 - I Saw the Rich Ones  
120 - My Soul Cries Out  
209 - Go, Make a Difference

*An Offering to the Churches by Unifor Unifaith Community Chapter*

76 - If I Have Been the Source of Pain  
90 - Don't Be Afraid  
142 - Oh, A Song Must Rise  
150 - Spirit God, Be our Breath  
165 - There Is A Time  
154 - Deep In Our Hearts  
141 - We Are All One People  
28 - God of the Bible  
178 - Who Is My Mother?  
212 - Sent Out In Jesus' Name  
28 - God of the Bible

These suggestions are from United Church of Canada hymnbooks: *Voices United*, and *More Voices*.  
Also:

Check list of hymns in *Voices United* for "Work" and "Recreation," (page 1059), "Justice" (1045),  
"Completion of Creation" and "City of God" (hymns 708 - 719).

Check list of hymns in *More Voices* for "Justice," and "Kingdom" (282)



1919 Winnipeg general strike rally One of the Winnipeg Strike leaders, Roger Bray, addresses the pro-labour masses in Victoria Park in June 1919

### **Another Prayer:**

#### **A Prayer for Labour Day in the City**

*"It is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in their toil." (Ecclesiastes 3:13)*

*Labour Day in the city is a holiday for many, but still a work day for those who labour on our behalf.*

Energy of Love,  
on this Labour Day weekend, we pause and remember  
the union bosses, the CEOs,  
and all who work in our world.

Let this be a time of celebration and appreciation.

Let's give thanks for:

the street sweepers and bus drivers;  
the traffic cops and pavement layers;  
the office cleaners and security guards  
and all the many workers who make our cities clean and safe.

Let's remember

the families who run the corner convenience stores,  
and the men and women who cook at the food trucks and hotdog stands  
so we can enjoy our time at the park or baseball games.

And let's pray especially for

the unemployed and the under employed,  
the downsized and the part-time,  
the young people who look for work.

Help us, O God, to care for one another

and honour one another  
no matter who we are  
and what we do.

The prayer is shared with permission of Nancy Elizabeth Hardy, author of *Worship in the City: Prayers and Songs for Urban Settings* (United Church Publishing House)

## Communications

Let union locals in your neighbourhood, community or region know that you are commemorating the Strike in worship, and invite input and participation. Find locals online.

## Grace

We are thankful for these and all the good things of life. We recognize that they are a part of our common heritage and come to us through the efforts of our brothers and sisters the world over. What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all. To this end, may we take our share in the world's work and the world's struggles. J.S. Woodsworth

## Bulletin quotes

You will save your own precious soul only as you give yourself to the service of others. We have tried to provide for the poor. Yet have we tried to alter the social conditions that lead to poverty?

J.S. Woodsworth

When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist. Dom Helder Camera

“Whatever is foreseen in joy  
must be lived out from day to day.  
Vision held open in the dark  
by our ten thousand days of work.

Harvest will fill the barn; for that  
the hand must ache,  
the face must sweat.

and yet no leaf or grain is filled  
by work of ours; the field is tilled  
and left to grace.  
That we may reap,  
great work is done  
while we're asleep.

When we work well,  
a Sabbath mood  
rests on our day and finds it good.”  
By Wendell Berry, from *Sabbaths*, North Point Press, 1987

### Book Club/Study Group Suggestions

(barb janes)

*Fox* (novel), by Margaret Sweatman. A deft examination of the 1919 Winnipeg General strike and a startling reminder of the dangers of xenophobia, bigotry, greed and fear. ISBN 9780888015952

*1919: A Graphic History of the Winnipeg General Strike*, by The Graphic History Collective and David Lester. One hundred years later, the Winnipeg General Strike remains one of the most significant events in Canadian history. This comic book revisits the strike to introduce new generations to its many lessons, including the power of class struggle and solidarity and the brutal tactics that governments and bosses use to crush workers' movements. ISBN 9781771134200

*The Bolshevik's Revenge* (novel), by Allan Levine. Crime fiction by historian; cynical sleuth Sam Klein looks critically at the 1919 strike, seeing on both sides heroes and villains, traitors and fanatics, ignorance and idealism. ISBN-13: 978-1894283335

*Papergirl* (middle-school novel), by Melinda McCracken with Penelope Jackson. Ten-year-old Cassie, bright, determined and bored at school, volunteers for the 1919 strike committee as a papergirl, distributing the strike bulletin at the corner of Portage and Main. She soon sees this isn't a lark, but a risky and brave movement that will change her forever. ISBN 9781773631295

“*Form Without Power? Wesleyan Influences and the Winnipeg Labour Church*”, Historical Papers, 1994, by Joanne Carlson Brown, Canadian Society of Church History. Unpacks the Methodist roots of the Canadian social gospel movement, with particular references to the Winnipeg strike and the role of the Labour Church.

<https://churchhistcan.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/1994-5-brown-article.pdf>

*Tolpuddle Martyr: Pioneer Farmer, James Brine in Canada, 1844 – 1902*, (2010), by Don Macintyre. The struggles and successes of one of the Tolpuddle Martyrs who came to Ontario, Canada after being released from British punishment for forming a trade union. ISBN 9780986602306

<https://tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/shop/products/tolpuddle-martyr-pioneer-farmer>

*STAND! the story of the Winnipeg General Strike (2019)*. Being released in cinemas on May 15, 2019 to coincide with the beginning of the Strike. An immigrant Romeo and Juliet battle for love and a better future during a time of social upheaval.

Director: Robert Adetuyi Writers: Danny Schur & Rick Chafe Stars: Marshall Williams, Laura Slade Wiggins, Lisa Bell, Gregg Henry. <http://stand-movie.com>

### Lectionary Resources:



Winnipeg General Strike – Victoria Park: Caption Winnipeg Strike -1919. Meeting in Victoria Park. Source: The University of Manitoba, Winnipeg Tribune Photo Collection : Winnipeg – General Strike 1919.

### Easter 6 (May 26, 2019)

#### Readings

#### \*Acts 16:9-15

*Paul's nighttime vision of preaching in Macedonia*

"Come over . . . and help us." A man of Macedonia shows up in a vision to Paul, expanding Paul's understanding of his ministry of proclaiming the good news. When he goes, he meets Lydia, who was already meeting with other women at the riverside. She and her household agree to be baptized. After World War 1, many workers (male and female) and returning soldiers were envisioning/expecting/demanding a different society. They needed help from leaders who could help them seek change, but, like Lydian and the other women by the river, they had already begun to empower themselves by building organizations. What workers/groups are doing something similar and calling for help a hundred years later. Where is resistance to exploitation already happening, and who is being called to come over and help?

#### Psalm 67

*Let the nations be glad and sing for joy*

A psalm of jubilation. The Holy One is gracious, earth is bountiful, and the people are judged fairly and offered guidance.

#### Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5

*John of Patmos' vision of a city of peace and plenty*

Amidst widespread persecution of Christians, John has a vision of a society beyond hunger, thirst and injustice, a place where gates may be left permanently open because there is security, a city with no temple, even, because the glory of the Holy One lights the way for all, commoners and monarchs.

#### John 14:23-29

*Jesus' assurance of the coming of the Advocate*

Early in the Farewell Discourse, Jesus says he may be gone from their midst, but another, a Spirit, an Advocate will come to help.

or

**John 5:1-9** *Jesus heals at the pool of Beth-zatha on the Sabbath*

"I have no one to help me," says a man who had been ill for thirty-eight years when asked if he wanted to be made well. This could be an ill economic system speaking. Yes, the income gap is growing steadily wider. Yes, younger people have come to expect short-term, non-unionized, precarious work. Yes, the wealthy are aided in the sheltering of wealth in tax havens. Yes, the economy is over-taxing the resources and capacity of the planet, but what can be done? This is learned impotence, what Dorothy Soelle calls self-imposed impotence (in *The Silent Cry*). "Stand up, and move to something healthier," says the Healer.

*Sermon ideas*

'Help' seems to be a theme through all the readings—help needed, or help offered, with a goal (in the Revelations reading) of a very different society. When workers seek to help one another by organizing, they often/usually meet strong resistance from other interests. Who is their Advocate? Is the vision of a different society/economy/politics valid, or a cruel jest? How can one sustain one's spirit in the face of obstacles or persecution? Christians involved in the Winnipeg General Strike imagined the end of what they called "Churchianity" and the beginning of something more organic, more grounded, more effective in seeing the realm of the Holy come "on earth as in heaven." (See the short history of the Strike included in the resource package.)

**Easter 7 C (June 2, 2019)**

*Readings*

**Acts 16:16–34** *Paul and Silas in Prison*

A slave girl being exploited by her owners is freed by Paul, leading to the imprisonment of Paul and Silas. Two thousand years later, girls are still being enslaved to benefit or enrich their owners, in Sudan, Nigeria, Canada and elsewhere. There are occasionally freed by the authorities. In Winnipeg, in 1919, women were trapped in a wage structure that could only imagine their pay as "pin money" or something, a supplement to what the "man of the house" was bringing home. (Statistics of the time reveal how many women were, in fact, primary wage earners.) The story here reveals the anti-slavery theme that threads through the bible from Exodus to Acts. Where Paul instructs a spirit of divination to leave the girl, it is an earthquake that shakes open prison doors when Paul and Silas' are the captives, and unfastens the chains of all the prisoners. Who else is enslaved these days and what forces are needed to free those in bondage —prophetic anger, natural disaster or . . .?

**Psalm 97** *The Glory of God's Reign*

What false images do we worship these days, what worthless idols command attention? Many thoughts occur, of course, and it's tempting to be hard on individuals caught up in that which does not give life. It's harder to step back and see the death-dealing patterns of behaviour we take for granted—a minimum wage, but no maximum wage, the general agreement that it is legal for a few individuals to have as much wealth as a small nation, and to pass it to their children, for instance. Instead of letting bitterness, resentment or fury about injustice paralyze them, though, "Light dawns for the righteous," and they rejoice and give thanks.

**Revelation 22:12–14, 16–17, 20–21** *Alpha and Omega*

The seer of Patmos concludes with a vision of the tree of life that is once again at the centre of human community, as in the Garden of Eden. The water of life is a free gift to all. This beautiful alternative to the suffering and oppression of the world is coming soon, he insists. The strikers in Winnipeg and elsewhere nurtured just such a vision of a world beyond war, exploitation and want.

**John 17:20–26** *Immersed in Love, as one*

The ancient dream (and motto of the United Church of Canada): that all may be one. A rebuke and an invitation to those determined to divide us. Love is the power that breaks down barriers, that they may become “completely one.” The leaders of the Winnipeg Strike insisted that their job action and movement be peaceful and law-abiding. They made sure basic services were continued by authorizing some strikers, such as milk wagon drivers and bakery workers, to stay on the job. They urged factory owners and employers to share power with workers and limit their profits to a reasonable percentage. Even as the Strikers were being demonized as revolutionaries by some, some capitalists across the country accepted this challenge and found ways to include workers in workplace decision-making.

*Sermon ideas*

How and when does the congregation discuss its understanding of a life-giving vision for the world? It hears powerful ideas such as those in today’s readings, but does it reflect theologically about what the kingdom “on earth” really looks like? The risk is that the vision becomes a Sunday morning joy that does not influence or shape the congregation’s mission in the community and the world. Do we dare to dream like John of Patmos, then talk together about how as a congregation, region or denomination help birth the dream here and now?

**Pentecost C** (also, Church Union Sunday, June 9, 2019)

*Readings*

**Acts 2:1-21**      *The Spirit comes as universal understanding*

The Acts reading depicts a whole new era, a new way of being human and being community. A Spirit like a cleansing wind or fire somehow enables all those of different languages seeking such a vision to understand each other, when “everyone who calls on the name of Love will be saved/at peace/at one. This reverses the confusion depicted in the Tower of Babel story. Those given new “tongues” retain this new Spirit even when they are mocked.

or **Genesis 11:1-9**      *The Tower of Babel*

The Genesis reading is a mirror image of the Acts story about a shared understanding among all people. Pride or a false sense of self-sufficiency is given as the reason for a scattering of a cohesive community and the confusing of language. Work is in vain if it is only to “make a name” for self. In both stories, clarity and understanding among all people are seen as good things, and also rare, and vulnerable.

**Psalm 104:24-34, 35b**      *All creatures look to the Creator*

The Creator is responsible for all of creation. And true life involves continuing to receive the spirit of life—a spirit of generosity and justice.

**Romans 8:14-17** (or Acts 2:1-21 – see above)      *We did not receive a spirit of slavery, or fear*

The Spirit again: a spirit of adoption, so that those outside the original covenant with Israel may also understand themselves not as slaves—that time is past—but as siblings: children of Love.

**John 14:8-17, (25-27)**      *My peace I leave with you*

John’s intricate exploration of the relationship between the members of the Trinity, and with human followers in the Farewell Discourse. Love for Christ equals keeping the love commandment. Jesus’ disciples will have peace and untroubled hearts. A hard promise to remember sometimes, though always important, in the struggle for justice. The Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Spirit of truth, will be with us.

*Sermon ideas*

Together the readings are a hymn to the power of love for clear communications and real community. Can love really be commanded (“Love others as I have loved you.”)? The preacher always has this challenge: how to help/encourage worshippers to be more loving. In the case of Jesus and the disciples, there were several years of very close shared ministry and living, it seems, so disciples would know very well how Jesus had loved them. Those

attending worship may need stories of others, or word pictures, to inspire love and bridge cultural, linguistic or geographic gulfs. A single image of the body of little Alan Kurdi at the edge of the sea, for example, somehow turned thousands of Syrian refugees from remote strangers into people deserving solidarity and assistance from Canadians. The Strike is one such Canadian story, as tens of thousands of people committed deeply to each other and a new world born through peaceful struggle. While some demonized them, 1919, or these days the sojourner (Syrian, Haitian, Latin American, etc.), Love sees people who are vulnerable, beautiful, loveable, created in the image of God, children of Love.

**Trinity C** (also, First Nations Sunday, Father's Day, June 16, 2019)

*Readings*

**Proverbs 8:1–4, 22–31** *Wisdom's part in creation*

Wisdom is portrayed as female, and a partner in creation. Now, to the writer of Proverbs, she cries out everywhere, getting closer and closer to home: the heights, the crossroads, the town gates, the doorway. And her cry is universal, "To you, O people, . . . and to all that live." While much scripture (Old and New Testament) focuses on males and masculinity, there are numerous examples like this one that reveal a more balanced understanding of creation and human society. The reading concludes with unbridled joy and positivity: Wisdom rejoices in the inhabited world and delights in the human race. A powerful reminder when so much of the news about the inhabited world and the human race is negative.

**Psalms 8 (VU 732)** *How glorious is God's name*

First a female Wisdom, in the Proverbs reading. Now "infants and children" appear. Their praises "reach up to the heavens." The Psalmist reflects on the same theme as Proverbs: the status of humankind. Being made "a little less than divine" could lead to hubris. Or it could lead to awe and humility.

**Romans 5:1–5** *Results of Justification*

Hope: Paul's succinct contribution to the biblical discussion of how to carry on when there are sufferings, as he calls them. And all because, "God's love has been poured into our hearts."

**John 16:12–15** *The Spirit of truth*

"Stay tuned!", says Jesus, "there's more to come." John is sometimes critiqued for making Jesus' very pointed, this-world message into something ethereal. This part of the Farewell Discourse fits in well, however, with the theme running through the other readings for the day, one of keeping one's spirits up.

*Sermon ideas*

So many of the struggles over the years for justice, dignity, safety, health, food security and so on have been the result of profound persistence and patience. Confronting colonizers, or exploiters, or privileged people seems to take years, generations, or even lifetimes. The social agenda of the Winnipeg Strikers still sounds advanced. Some of what they imagined has come to pass, but many others (daycare, truly universal healthcare, equality for women, for example), still lie ahead of us a century later. The Committee of One Thousand that rose up in Winnipeg to resist the changes the Strikers wanted employed fear, falsehoods and illegal methods to keep the status quo. The vision of a just society needs to be nurtured and sustained in many hearts. These readings help give heart. The preacher seeking to engage fathers can invite them to celebrate the contributions all—male, female, younger, older—to both the work of praise and the struggle for justice.

**Pentecost 2** (also Pride Sunday in some locales, June 23, 2019)

*Readings*

**1 Kings 18:20-21, (22-29), 30-39** *Elijah's Triumph over the Priests of Baal*

Hebrew people arriving in Canaan (Palestine) would have encountered Baal worship among the local people. Conflict between competing claims of deities ensues, with this encounter the most vivid. Who provides rain (and therefore crops and herds) for the people, your God or ours? Elijah goes up against the King and four hundred prophets of Baal. The result is dramatic. Worship of Yahweh is characterized by fierce ethical demands for fairness between social classes and to some extent, genders, unlike that of some other faiths, including, it seems, Baal worship. In regard to a Labour and/or Pride Sunday service or sermon, the reading asks us to consider our values at a deep level: which are ultimate for us? Will we resist like Elijah, even in the face of big odds?

**Psalm 96** *Praise to God Who Comes in Judgement*

God judges with equity, with righteousness, with truth, and so is worthy of all praise. Those lacking worldly power count on fair judgements in court, and the psalm sets a high bar for judges. Why a new song is needed to sing to God is not clear, but the poetry is evocative: the worshipper is called to respond to God's creativity with creativity of her own.

**Galatians 1:1-12** *Being set free, and falling back*

A New Testament corollary to the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal: confronting those who have fallen away from the truth. Paul is "astonished" that church members are deserting Paul's teaching, and turning to a false gospel. Taking on Elijah's role, Paul defends himself (and his gospel), saying he did not set out to please people with it. Those seeking to introduce a "new song" to the world, a new way for people to live together in harmony, may find they have to lift up the vision over and over, like Paul.

**Luke 7:1-10** *Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant*

Another story of healing, meaning another way for Jesus to highlight someone's faith. The centurion relates to Jesus as an authority figure, like himself. Jesus' comment about finding (or rather, not finding) such faith in Israel must have angered some of those around him. The story is also a window into the complex relationships between Jews and Gentiles in Jesus' day, even Gentiles who are part of the occupying force.

*Sermon ideas*

The Winnipeg Strikers managed to maintain a high degree of solidarity for the six weeks of the Strike. Their determination to avoid social upset and violence is notable, especially after the Special Constables (lightly trained replacements for the Winnipeg police force, which was all fired) began to provoke and harass them. After the mayhem of June 21, 1919, when two strikers were killed and dozens injured when the RCMP opened fire, Strike leaders decided to end the job action. The readings are about conflict of various kinds, with various strategies offered: Elijah's, a judge's, Paul's, Jesus'. The history of the Strike offers another: how women quickly organized to look after each other and male strikers who were going hungry, and also powerfully took the issue to women not yet engaged in the struggle. The preacher may wish to explore how love, justice and truth should confront hatred, injustice and falsehoods. What kind of resistance is justified if the end, or goal, is good?

**Pentecost 12 C** (also, Labour Sunday, September 1, 2019)

*Readings*

**Jeremiah 2:4-13** *Listen up!, part 1*

God's complaint about the people's behaviour. Despite being brought from a place of oppression (slavery in Egypt), to a promised place of "fruits and good things" (Israel), they have defiled the land by ignoring the law, and going after things that are no good them, even (or perhaps especially) those with authority: those who handle the law, priests, rulers and prophets. Their own efforts at a fair and peaceable society are like cracked cisterns—they don't hold water. This prophet, Jeremiah, sees with clear eyes, and rages against those who are abusing the covenant.

**Psalm 81:1, 10-16**      *Listen up!, part 2*

The psalmist echoes Jeremiah: the people are stubborn and not listening to the call to do justice.

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16      *How to's for the faithful*

Practical tips for the life of faith: mutual love, hospitality to strangers, prison visits, faithful relationships, contentment with what one has, imitation of faithful people and leaders, doing good, sharing what one has. Where Jeremiah talks about the big picture of how society ought to be shaped, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews focuses on personal behaviour that honours Jesus' ministry. Two sides of the same coin.

**Luke 14:1, 7-14**      *Table talk*

Banquet etiquette. Rather than claiming honour and risking humiliation, wait to be recognized by the host. When you give a banquet, invite those who cannot repay you—the economically and physically challenged, for instance—so that it is true generosity you are offering, not a quid pro quo with relatives or rich neighbours. Jesus' teachings can be taken at the personal and the societal levels, and are equally challenging on both.

*Sermon ideas*

The bible reminds us that bad behaviour on the part of those trusted with authority is not new. Everything is better when everyone lives according to a love standard, and when the law is created and applied the same way. Authorities' responsibility is to attend to the needs of weaker sisters and brothers, and the land itself, not those who already enjoy power and privilege. The Strikers knew this, and tried to live it, only to be met with fierce opposition, and in the end, machine gun fire on a city street. These days, those trying to disrupt peaceful change are more likely to use social media. The faithful need to be gentle as doves and wise as serpents (Matthew 10:16) to embody, proclaim and enact their truth.

## **A Sermon by Brian McIntosh**

### ***God Labours in Creation***

This weekend we mark another Labour Day holiday, and this year we mark the centenary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, a landmark event in Labour history in Canada. As with a number of holidays, we have mostly forgotten the severe conflict which provides the historical context for current observances. In both the U.S. and Canada in the latter decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrialization was hitting its stride. New technologies and their commercial profits were reaping massive amounts of profit for a few, and a widening gap between rich and poor, a gap that has basically continued to widen ever since. When recounting the history of the holiday, many historians point to a massive march by sweatshop workers in New York City in 1882, demanding a shortening of the 12-14 hour workday. The 8-hour workday was considered radical and outrageously unreasonable by politicians and industrial leaders alike, and while most of us now enjoy the protection of the law for a 40-hour workweek, it wasn't that way until fairly recently in the long view of things.

The centenary of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike this year provides a special opportunity to recall a key moment in Canadian labour history, an opportunity that a United Church clergy group called Unifaith, a community group affiliated with the national union Unifor to which I belong, is marking with a special set of liturgical resources, including a few prayers and the hymn I'd written back in the spring for this occasion, which we'll also sing later.<sup>i</sup> It was the first mass strike in the country, involving 35,000 workers, half of whom didn't belong to a union, who went on the picket line for six weeks in support of the collective bargaining goals of building and metal trades workers.<sup>ii</sup>

The vigour with which employers opposed unionization in those days is not to be forgotten, and yet fairly broad public support offered a glimpse of promise for the goals of labourers at the time. Winnipeg had grown to become the third largest city in the country, whereas within a decade or so prior to 1919 it had been the sixth largest, and this growth made for both a diverse and dynamic city and the demarcation of rather clear lines between the haves and the have nots. Winnipeg also displayed an activist culture, being the hotbed of both the emerging social gospel movement and an active suffragist moment that had Manitoba become the first province to extend the voting franchise to some, though not all, women in 1916.

Despite the city's growth, there was a deep economic downturn that became depression-like between 1913-1915, caused in part by two national catalysts, namely a sharp decline in British investment due to their concentration of efforts in the Balkan conflict at the time, and also caused by a federal ordinance that outlawed labour actions and strikes for the duration of the First World War until 1918. These events led to real wages declining, and served to fuel worker resentment, which resulted in a tripling of union membership in Canada between 1915 and 1919.

All of this set the stage for the unfolding of the General Strike, precipitated by the Western Labour Conference in Calgary in March, at which delegates voted to form the revolutionary One Big Union. In early May the Metal Trades Council called for a general strike, and the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council held a poll of its membership, which voted overwhelmingly, over 90%, in favour of the strike. On May 15<sup>th</sup> the first to walk out were the "Hello Girls" – the telephone operators, and by 11 am 30,000 workers, union and non-union, had walked off the job. Within two days the Strike Committee had issued authorization cards for certain essential services to continue operating, following the example of the Seattle General Strike of three months earlier. Yet within ten days the acting Canadian Ministers of both Justice and Labour had issued edicts for postal workers and others to return to work. These edicts were rejected by vote, and both city police and returned soldiers were as supportive as possible, the former refusing to sign an anti-union pledge but promising to uphold law and order, and the latter marching thousands strong in solidarity over the course of three days in late May and early June.

By this time, of course, news of the strike had spread far and wide, and on June 3<sup>rd</sup> sympathetic strikes in solidarity with Winnipeg workers were held in Brandon, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto, and Amherst, Nova Scotia. On June 8<sup>th</sup> the great Methodist J.S. Woodsworth, a leader in the social gospel movement – this was before the United Church of Canada was born in 1925, after all! – addressed 10,000 workers at a rally, offering encouragement. The next day Winnipeg Mayor Charles Gray fired the entire police force, and hired so-called "Specials" to replace them, recruited and paid for by the Employer-based Citizens' Committee of 1000 and armed with baseball bats. Tensions continued to escalate, and on June 16 and 17, as the Metal trades employers proposed a settlement to the strike, the Royal Northwest Mounted Police raided labour halls and homes, arresting 10 leaders of the central strike committee and the next day announcing that they would be denied bail and held for deportation proceedings, the latter an early instance of anti-immigration sentiment that has its echo effect in our day in what's occurring in the U.S. in many places.

By June 21<sup>st</sup> the tension had reached a boiling point, and a silent protest of the arrest of the strike leaders was attacked by both Mounted Police and Specials, resulting in the wounding of 34 people, two deaths, and 84 arrests in a single episode that came to be known as "Bloody Saturday." The power imbalance proved to be too much for the striking workers, whose leadership announced the end of the strike on June 25<sup>th</sup> and called upon workers to continue the struggle in the political arena. At 11 am on June 26<sup>th</sup> the strike ended, and while there were some sentences doled out to those arrested leaders, a

few of them went on to be elected to the House of Commons as members of the Independent Labour Party, as well as to Winnipeg City Council or the School Board, as they continued the struggle to make labour gains in Canadian society.

Yes, I've spent some time describing the events of the General Strike of 1919, yet in many ways those events summarize why labour continues to struggle today, as the same underlying issues of inequality, mistrust of immigrant workers, and poverty remain unresolved. Our labour tensions in Canada have historically played out less violently than in the States of our U.S. neighbours, relatively speaking, for which we can be grateful, and we've gone on to universalize health care and education, for the most part, in a way that they have not. But the place of the church in relation to labour has also ebbed and flowed over time, gaining and then losing its cultural status as it has dared, and then failed, to engage the great public questions of the day. The more recent trend has clearly been a retreat from public discourse into the private sphere of individual spirituality in direct proportion to our decline in both membership and influence, secularism relegating both our theology and our presumed holistic mission, now limited to our so-called survival, to the sidelines of Canadian life.

Yet one can't help but think that Jesus looks upon our retreat with tears, as he always stood beside, and called his followers to stand with, the marginalized, the poor, and the disenfranchised. Jesus' favourite topic, by far, was economic justice, with more than 2,000 direct textual references, or one out of every ten, in the first three synoptic gospels.<sup>iii</sup> Our Gospel reading for today is no exception, as Jesus speaks clearly against creating divisions between rich and poor, and calling the rich to reduce that gap as a matter of honour. And the reading from the prophet Jeremiah makes two references to God's people mistakenly choosing to go after "*things that do not profit*" (Jeremiah 2: 8), the irony being that, at least in part, the exclusive hoarding of profits by the rich at the expense of the rest is one of those things.

While it's true that society has embraced many of the Social Reconstruction vision and programs that were outlined shortly after, and that workers have made tremendous gains in the century since the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, they are still counted overwhelmingly among the poor or middle classes, seeking to secure rights and benefits that have either never been gained or have been clawed back over time, and gain a larger piece of the economic pie that has seen the wage gap continue to rise exponentially and, in some cases, obscenely. Is it not the continuing place of the church, as followers of the first crucified and then risen One, to strive for the same things alongside labourers of all kinds, as we struggle to achieve real world gains in economic equality, labour dignity, workplace safety, cultural integrity, social cohesion and harmony, and just relationships among all people, including those between employers and workers? Even the fact that the word "holiday" has its origin as a sacred, and therefore holy, day, when most folks get a brief respite from their toils and workplace tribulations to gain some rest and renewal, ought to wake us up to the importance of reflecting on our calling in the midst of this Labour Day holiday weekend.

In the Bible, and therefore, we trust, throughout history, the Spirit of God calls and gifts people to work in active anticipation of the transformation of the world, so that God's just and equitable governance, as known in Jesus' metaphor of the reign of God, can be enacted for the benefit of all humanity and, we increasingly realize, for the good of the earth itself. The contemporary ideology of work as profit-making preoccupation with the advancement of the self has, as one theologian wrote in a book about work, "*little to do either with worship of God or with God's demands on human life; it has much to do with 'worship' of self and human demands on the self.*"<sup>iv</sup> There are religious, social, economic and political implications and consequences to the holiday we as Christians celebrate tomorrow, so let us remember our calling this weekend to labour alongside God for harmony and healing in this one

indivisible creation. Let us remember, as in the words of the James Openheim poem and subsequent feminist labour song, born in the 1912 women's strike by textile workers in Massachusetts, that:

*"As we go marching, marching, we bring the greater days,  
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.  
No more the drudge and idler, ten that toil where one reposes,  
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and roses, bread and roses."*<sup>v</sup>

Amen.

#### Endnotes

- 1 *"God Who Laboured in Creation,"* written in 2019 to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike.
- 2 For previous and subsequent background and details in this sermon I'm indebted to a number of sources, including the Unifaith package of materials posted on the internet to accompany the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, to which I contributed prayers as well as the above hymn, and a few articles in the March/April 2019 edition of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives *Monitor* magazine, especially *"Winnipeg 1919 Causes and Consequences,"* by Paul Moist, pgs. 14-18.
- 3 This information, as well as the comments about the work week hours in the first paragraph, are taken from Ken Sehested's Labour Day sermon to his Circle of Mercy congregation on Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010 entitled *"Labour in the Shadow of Sabbath,"* accessed via his Prayer and Politics blog, to which I subscribe.
- 4 Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, (Wipf & Stock Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 2001; previously published by Oxford University Press, 1991), pg. 129.
- 5 Accessed in Sehested, op. cit.

**A sermon preached by Rev. barb janes  
at The United Church in Meadowoods, Winnipeg, Canada  
in commemoration of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike  
Pentecost Sunday, June 9, 2019**

#### ***Hello Girls***

Acts 2: 1-21

Verna surprised herself. On May 15, Verna, one of the "hello girls" at the Salter Street Telephone Exchange, Verna, who was a quiet, well-behaved young woman - Verna surprised herself. When her shift ended at 7:00 am, Verna and 499 other "hello girls" punched out, left the building and told the next shift of "hello girls" not to come in. May 15, 1919 - the beginning of the Winnipeg General Strike. It was set to begin at 11:00 am, but Verna and the "hello girls" were the first group to walk out. By the end of the day, 25,000 people had joined the strike, virtually shutting down what was then Canada's third largest city. Verna caught the Spirit, and a deep hunger for justice took hold of her.

When the day of Pentecost came, the disciples were all together in one place. Out of nowhere, there was the sound of a mighty wind, gale force, and then, like wildfire, the Spirit filled their hearts and heads and voices, and they began to speak as the Spirit prompted them.

Jerusalem was packed with pilgrims from all over the world, a multi-cultural mash-up. And when the searching pilgrims heard the gale-force winds, they came running to see what was what. They came to SEE but were gob-smacked by what they HEARD - one after another, their own mother-tongues being spoken with a message of the good news of God's justice. Each heard that good news IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE: Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Persian, Urdu, Mandarin, Oromo, Ukrainian, Yiddish, English, Tagalog, Kurdish. "Holy cow! They're speaking my language, they're talking to me - and the news is good!" Their giddy heads were spinning. But then another voice jeered, "Are you kidding? They're drunk."

Not everyone catches the Spirit. Indeed, some actively resist catching the Spirit, or, to put it a better way, some resist letting the Spirit catch them.

The Biblical story of Pentecost is a miracle story, a story about the miracle of diversity, the miracle of inter-culturalism, the miracle of understanding. We here in Winnipeg are marking the 100th Anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike, an event that lasted 6 weeks, and brought the city together in Spirit - in some ways, the Winnipeg Strike was a Pentecostal movement. As journalist Frances Beynon put it at the time, "I am thankful to be living in these fighting days...when humanity is seething and boiling and stirring." Seething, boiling, stirring sounds like the rush of a mighty wind and tongues of fire.

Consider the intercultural aspect of the Winnipeg General Strike: hello girls and returned World War I veterans, Russian immigrants and the notorious American activist Emma Goldman (who famously said, "if I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution"), clergy like J.S. Woodsworth and Bill Ivens, and suffragette leaders like Frances Beynon and Winona Flett Dixon, all working together to address the economic injustice of an 80% raise in the cost of living but a mere 18% raise in wages. The Spirit was moving! Even as sharp class divisions and xenophobia (the fear of immigrants who might be - gasp!- Bolsheviks), even as these divisions sought to divide and conquer, the multicultural make-up of the 1919 strikers is a Pentecost-style miracle.

Of course, not everyone caught the Spirit. The wealthy business interests created an anti-strike Citizen's Committee of One Thousand, and aimed to discredit the strikers' by labelling them as Bolsheviks, communists, and Jews, while simultaneously carrying their own banner of Empire which read, "To hell with the alien enemy! God save the King!"

Not everyone caught the Spirit, so Rev William Ivens was dismissed from his ministry position at McDougall Methodist Church. But Ivens went on to form the Labour Church (a model borrowed from England), a church concerned with the establishment of justice on earth now. It became the fastest growing church in Canada and by June of 1919, no building in Winnipeg was big enough to hold a Labour Church service. At Victoria Park, some 10,000 people attended the Labour Church, hungry to hear the teachings of Jesus applied to the complex conditions of contemporary industrial life. The Spirit was moving! What else but the Spirit could give people the hope that poverty is curable? Another spiritual leader of the day, Rev Salem Bland, picked up on the images of Pentecost when he sermonized, "Christianity is a torrent. It is a fire. It is a passion for brotherhood, a raging hatred of everything that denies or forbids brotherhood."

At Pentecost, the believers were empowered to speak the good news of justice, and to speak that good news in many languages. When the Spirit came, it was astonishing, amazing, confusing. As we in Winnipeg mark the 100th anniversary of the General Strike with lectures and parades and T-shirts and a musical at Rainbow Stage, we Christians might ask ourselves where the Spirit would have us speak

good news of justice today, and in which languages? Might we speak the language of human dignity? Might we speak the language of affordable housing? Might we speak the language of welcoming refugees? Might we speak the language of the hard work of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples? Might we speak the language of support for families instead of child apprehensions? Might we speak the language of celebrating diversity? Might the Spirit help us to be curious and welcoming? Might the Spirit help us to be shaken up, to be astonished, to be amazed, and even to be confused? Might we let the Spirit in? Might we hold out the good news of distributive justice, so that all people can live in dignity? Might we make common cause with our sisters and brothers?

That would be a miracle. That would be the miracle of Pentecost, a miracle of the Spirit setting us on fire to take courage, knowing a better world is possible after all.



North Main Street, 21 June 1919, resulting in 30 casualties and one death  
(courtesy Library and Archives Canada/WS83/David Millar Coll.)

## **THE CHURCH AND THE WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE:**

### **A Short History**

Based on *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28* (University of Toronto Press, 1971), by Richard Allen, “Manitoba History: Women and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919,” by Mary Horodyski, University of Manitoba, *Manitoba History*, Number 11, Spring 1986, available online, *Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike*, ed. and intro. by Norman Penner (Toronto: James, Lewis & Samuel, 1973), and other resources (see below).

### **Faith groups were heavily involved in the labour and social movement that led up to the May 25 – June 25, 1919 General Strike, both leaders and congregations.**

This history has inspired a liturgy commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Clergy and laity from many Christian denominations were influenced by the 19<sup>th</sup> century work of Darwin, Marx, philosopher Auguste Comte and theologian Albrecht Ritschl, according to Richard Allen. This led them to re-examine the bible and Christian tradition, and join with others—Jews, socialists, and labour activists, to name some—in a campaign for “social reconstruction” featuring distributive justice. Allen finds early traces of this campaign in the 1890s. What follows is

a precis of Allen's description of the rise of the Social Gospel and of the labour strike in Winnipeg that became a Canada-wide movement for social change combined with additions from other sources.

### **Origins and figures of social gospel**

At the turn of the twentieth century two Canadian ministers, inspired by a minister in Manchester, England, tried to found Labour churches, one in Toronto, one in Massachusetts. (The one in Massachusetts lasted four years. The duration of the Toronto attempt is unknown.) In the 1890s and early 1900s, some Christian ministers and theologians began to assert that Christianity *is* socialism, and that long tradition had obscured this fact. (Some atheist socialists took offence at this equation, however.) In the growing Labour movement there was a widespread call for solidarity among all working people during this same period. In Canada, this resulted in organizations such the One Big Union, which sought to organize workers from all sectors of the economy, despite their belonging to existing sectoral unions. Ministers who supported a social gospel found ways to lend their voices and sometimes their churches to groups of workers.

Other professions and activists adopted a systemic approach to social ills. Very early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those concerned with slums and immigration began to open settlement houses to provide a wide variety of services to marginalized people: night school, libraries, savings banks, nurseries, clubrooms, gyms, medical centres, even restaurants. They frequently originated in student YMCAs. This happened first in the UK and US, then spread to Canada. Sara Carson, a Presbyterian, got her exposure in the US, then consulted (it seems) on the launch of numerous houses after she moved to Canada. J. S. Woodsworth visited a settlement house in London's East End in 1899-1900 and brought progressive ideas to Winnipeg's North End between 1907 and 1913 (during which time he also wrote *Strangers Within Our Gates*, 1909, and *My Neighbour*, 1911). We note that Woodsworth's trust in science led to his support for eugenics, by which a race could be "improved" by preventing some people from conceiving, and for Indian Residential Schools, ideas later condemned as deeply unfaithful to the Gospel.

"The Methodist Committee on Sociological Questions from 1894 to 1918 presented to General Conference ever more progressive and comprehensive reports for church guidance. By 1914 committees or departments of temperance and moral reform [in Protestant churches] had become full boards of social service and evangelism." (Allen, 12) "The Church Union movement, initiated in 1902, was making headway, and in 1907 an alliance of church and labour groups having won the Lord's Day Act, blossomed into the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada, jointly headed by J. G. Shearer and T. A. Moore, social service secretaries of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches respectively." (Allen, 13)

### **Theology**

"For the social gospel the earthbound movements of the disinherited and those who arose to champion them might, in their rough struggle for justice, express some of the profoundest religious yearnings of [humanity], while the hallowed institutions of religion might behave in ways that were not simply unbecoming but worldly and damning. The sacred might be very secular, and the secular sacred. All alike shared in the social guilt of an imperfect world, and the way from death to life, from the present social order to the Kingdom of God, lay through awakening the 'social consciousness' and harnessing oneself to the social problem with the yoke of social concerns." (Allen, 16-17)

### **Labour unrest**

During the First World War, social gospel leaders William Irvine (Presbyterian), and J. S. Woodsworth, William Ivens and Salem Bland (Methodist) developed the idea that if there were to be a conscription of labour, there should be a matching conscription of wealth. Woodsworth and Ivens were outspoken pacifists, a position that landed each of them in trouble with their congregations in 1918. Woodsworth quit the Methodist ministry. Ivens had the support of many members of McDougall Methodist Church, and effectively pushed back against his critics at first. The Stationing Committee of Manitoba Conference (that assigned ministers to congregations) later gave in, despite petitions from over half the members of the church and over 2,000 members of the Labour Temple, and removed him from McDougall. Ivens is a central figure in the General Strike, as he took over the editing of the strike newspaper.

The war was making clear the enrichment of businesses involved in the war effort and the cost (in lives and injuries) to working people. Many ministers preached strongly about social oppression during the war, and those involved with the Social Gospel moved to the left during 1916-19. (According to Allen, denominations were much less likely than individuals to become radical as they felt the call to minister to people in many different circumstances and walks of life.) That Canada sent a contingent to defeat the new “workers’ government” of Russia in 1917 incensed many Canadian workers and socialists.

In Winnipeg, men and women went out on strike in May of 1919 in support of metal workers to get a living wage and in defense of collective bargaining. Women workers were in an especially vulnerable predicament because their meagre wages were deemed to be in addition to that of a male breadwinner of the house. But thousands of women were heads of households, or the main wage earner, and their rate of pay was a disgrace. The General Strike lasted seven weeks. While the hour for “down tools” was eleven o’clock on May 25, the “hello girls” (operators) of the Manitoba Telephone System led the way at seven in the morning when their shift ended and they persuaded the next shift not to go in to work. Soon 25,000 – 30,000 workers were out, a huge proportion of all wage earners, and the city was effectively shut down.

### *Women and the Strike*

Women played a crucial role in the strike, as Horodyski makes clear. They quickly organized a food kitchen, taking donations of food and sandwiches, and feeding 1,200 to 1,500 meals a day, mainly to other women out on strike, but also to men in dire need. “Mrs. Helen Armstrong, noted socialist and president of the Women’s Labor League, was in charge of the arrangements” (Horodyski). The Y.W.C.A. provided accommodation for women whose homes were far from their work (a big challenge once transit stopped). The Strike was a huge step forward for the role of women in a reconstructed society in the minds of opinion leaders such as Woodsworth: “In the coming day women would take their place side by side with men, not as dependents or inferiors, but as equals. Thus there would be better relationships based on fundamental love and affinity. This strike was part of the great movement for the emancipation of women.” (From a June 12, 1919 speech, “ladies’ day,” at the Soldiers’ Parliament, reported in the Western Labour News the following day.)

Helen Armstrong recruited women workers (in stores and other workplaces) who were not part of any union to join the strike, and was arrested more than once for harassing women who filled in for strikers. Their actions were successful, at least at the Manitoba Telephone System: pay went from \$40/month (considered a living wage) to \$50, then \$60/month during the course of the Strike.

### *Opposition to the Strike*

Winnipeg business and cultural leaders quickly formed The Committee of 1,000 ostensibly to maintain public services, something the Strike Committee had already promised to do. It quickly became apparent that the real goals of the Committee of 1,000 were to oppose and break the Strike, and more widely to contain the movement for workers’ rights. The Committee, headed by A. J. Andrews, a former provincial premier, got the ear of the federal government, and Andrews was made a special deputy minister of justice. Before long the Committee had effectively usurped the authority of both the City Council and the Provincial Legislature. When the Winnipeg police union expressed sympathy with the strikers, the Strike Committee urged them to stay on the job to keep order. They agreed. The Committee of 1,000 insisted, however, that the 600 officers sign an oath of loyalty. Twelve did so. On June 9, all the others were then fired, and 1,200 lightly-trained Special Constables hired in their place. Even the Chief of Police was replaced. Unlike the police, the Special Constables made it a point to confront, intimidate and provoke groups of strikers.

Penner points out that many of the actions of Andrews and the Committee of 1,000 were extra-legal: keeping employers from settling with their workers to maintain upper class solidarity, ordering a printing company to stop printing the strikers’ daily bulletin, arresting Strike leaders on flimsy grounds, passing into law the immigrant deportation act in the span of 45 minutes, shipping arms to Winnipeg surreptitiously (Penner, xv-xvi). In 1926, J. S. Woodsworth characterized this brutal response during debate in the House of Commons: “There was then what

might almost be described as a conspiracy against labour.” Penner reveals how fearful members of the Manitoba establishment were of Bolshevism, and how ignorant of any distinctions between Russian communism and British socialism. He names Clifford Sifton, owner of the Free Press, (“A man more unsympathetic to the cause of the working man never lived”) and J. W. Dafoe, his editor (who “had a blind spot on the question of leftist activity . . .”, Penner, xviii).

#### ***How it ended***

The midnight arrest of six strike leaders on June 17 led to leaders calling off the Strike on June 25 after an infamous day of violence. Those arrested included labour leaders, Winnipeg alderman and prominent Jewish community leader, Abraham Albert Heaps, Rev. William Ivens and also four people “with alien sounding names,” three of them Jews, to bolster the government’s contention about foreign agitators.

The Strike Committee called for a huge street demonstration, a “silent parade,” with nothing to provoke violence—no banners, songs, slogans or speeches—outside the Winnipeg City Hall on June 21 to protest the arrests. When a street car approached the crowd, however, they attempted to overturn it. Persuaded by the exaggerated and panicky claims of the Committee of 1,000 that the Strike was really a Bolshevik coup, the federal government over-reacted to the first actions of strikers that were anything other than peaceful. Special Constables provoked the crowd and Mounties on horseback charged them. When strikers fought back, sniper and machine gun fire by Mounties wounded at least thirty and killed one, with another man dying later of his wounds. June 21 became known as “Bloody Saturday.” The strike was broken, and officially called off four days later.

(J.S. Woodsworth was arrested in a subsequent sweep after he had returned to Winnipeg to take up Ivens’ editorial and platform leadership. He launched a campaign for a seat in the provincial legislature from jail, and was elected while still incarcerated.)

#### ***Social Reconstruction and Canadian denominations***

The Methodist Church was by far the most eager of the denominations to embrace the vision of a different kind of society based on Christian and socialist principles. Conservatives in the Church did object, but kept losing votes. This eagerness began earlier in the century, was heightened by the First World War, and survived the collapse of the General Strike. A 1918 report of the Conference Committee on Social Service and Evangelism (a committee of the General Board of Social Service and Evangelism) “condemned special privilege, autocratic business organization, profiteering, and all unearned wealth. It called for the development of democratic forms of industrial organization which would make labour a co-partner in management, profit, and risk, and at the same time urged the nationalization of natural resources industries, means of communication and transportation, and public utilities. It further recommended such legislative controls on industry as were necessary to secure labour a wage adequate to a reasonable living, business a profit adequate to its continuance, and ‘the public all returns in excess of these.’ Although the board had urged social insurance for illness, accident, unemployment, mothers, and old age, the conference committee referred only to the last.” Allen reports that this platform was well to the left of any political party until the creation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in 1933.

The Methodists went even further, though. The Army and Navy Board of the church called for a general conference committee on the church in relation to the war and patriotism. “This committee’s rejection of capitalism was almost complete: ‘the present economic system stands revealed as one of the roots of war.’ The evangelical emphasis on changing society by changing individual minds or spirits was abandoned in the face of the ‘moral perils inherent in the system of production for profits . . . The system rather the individual calls for change.’” The report called on the church to “demand nothing less than a transference of the whole economic life from a basis of competition and profits to one of co-operation and service.” Though the Spanish flu epidemic was thinning attendance at the October 1918 Methodist General Conference, after initial vehement opposition, the resolution passed 70 – 4.

In addition to national and regional church resolutions, the Social Gospel took the form of specialized congregations. A Labour Church started in Winnipeg in 1918 by William Ivens boomed in 1919, becoming a

gathering place for 5,000-10,000 workers (in a park) every Sunday, and the spin-off of eight more congregations. These quickly failed upon the end of the strike and the shift in public opinion away from support of workers in the early 1920s.

With the end of the war, the “superficial unities of late wartime Canada were in dissolution,” according to Allen. The link between (atheist) socialists and socialist Christians was not tight. Farmers’ and industrial workers’ interests were somewhat different. Returning soldiers were furious to find how ill-prepared society was for their reintegration. They stormed some factories to get jobs they felt should be theirs, not those of Bolsheviks and immigrants. The churches, despite fine sounding resolutions, were suspected by some of being tools of capitalism, the “progress of Christianity” having passed them by. Manufacturers began to launch an effective smear/scare campaign, seizing on a few platform or pulpit remarks of opinion leaders to characterize the Strike as nothing less than an insurrection. With events of violent revolutions in Russia and Hungary for comparison, it worked, and moderate supporters began to reverse themselves.

### *And then?*

The effects of the Strike were long lasting for both sides: most of those who founded the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the CCF, in 1933 had been heavily involved in leadership in 1919. They took their struggle to the arena of politics to enact their far-seeing program for justice. (The CCF became the New Democratic Party in August, 1961. The establishment took on a pervasive fear of Bolshevism that has affected worker-owner relations and social progress ever since. The repression of trade unionism (where workers in the same trade all belong to the same union though working for different employers) after 1919 led to unionization of many Canadian workers by American industrial unions that were more socially conservative. The late 20<sup>th</sup> century rise of neo-liberalism further jeopardized solidarity among working people.

### *In brief:*

- big support and leadership for social reconstruction and the Strike from (some) church leaders and bodies the atmosphere of 1918 and early 1919 (leading up to the Winnipeg Strike and Sympathetic Strikes in a dozen other cities across the country) was heady, euphoric, almost eschatological as Christian, Jewish and other leaders projected forward from a local strike by a specific group with specific demands (metal workers in three Winnipeg plants) to an overturning of an unjust economic system and its replacement by a society with both political *and* economic democracy (meaning worker involvement in industrial decision-making and modest profits for capital)
- Social Gospellers rejected charges of being amateur economists and said what they really wanted was for those making decisions (legislative, industrial, etc.) to do so in a truly Christian way, for the benefit of all, not the few.
- Radical Social Gospellers foresaw the fading of ‘Churchianity’ in favour of real religion, one that brought both “this day our daily bread” and the realm of peace and justice “on earth as in heaven.”
- Some capitalists took the challenge of reconstruction seriously. In the early 1920s they formed joint committees of workers and management to study the gospel, then began to implement reforms and innovations at their plants: cafeterias, pension plans, stock options for employees, industrial councils and recreational facilities. (An investigation revealed, however, that industrial councils tended to discourage labour organization.)
- A new law was enacted in response to the supposed threat of “foreign agitators” that allowed Canada to deport any immigrant alleged to challenge the established order. It took decades to get it off the books.

Article compiled by Robin Wardlaw, with input from barb janes.

## **Online Sources**

**Winnipeg General Strike, including the role of women**

**Winnipeg General Strike | The Canadian Encyclopedia**

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/winnipeg-general-strike>

The Winnipeg General Strike, 15 May-25 June 1919, is Canada's ... and women closed the city's factories, crippled Winnipeg's retail trade and stopped trains.

**Manitoba History: Women and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919**

[www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/11/women1919strike.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/11/women1919strike.shtml)

Apr 25, 2009 - Women began the Winnipeg general sympathetic strike. At 7:00 a.m. on the morning of Thursday, May 15, 1919, five hundred telephone ...

**Helen Jury Armstrong: The Canadian activist who fought for equal wages for women. In 1919.**

<https://www.cbc.ca/2017/canadathestoryofus/helen-jury-armstrong-the-canadian-activist-who-fought-for-equal-wages-for-women-in-1919-1.4093263>

May 1, 2017 - Armstrong played a vital role organizing women during the Winnipeg General Strike. ... Among them was Helen Jury Armstrong, a vocal proponent for union causes, an ardent feminist and a steadfast anti-war activist. ... These women have their own issues—most notably, equal pay for equal

**Winnipeg general strike - Wikipedia**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winnipeg\\_general\\_strike](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winnipeg_general_strike)

Role of women - When newspapers and articles commented on the strike and the women involved, the Winnipeg Tribune referenced to many of ...

History · 1919 general strike · Opposition · Aftermath

**Jewish leadership and participation**

**May 15: The Winnipeg General Strike, 1919 - Jewish Currents**

<https://jewishcurrents.org/may-15-the-winnipeg-general-strike-1919/>

May 14, 2015 - Sam Blumenberg, Michael Charitinoff, and Moses Almazov were among five immigrants arrested for instigating the Winnipeg General Strike, ... "The Winnipeg Jewish community," writes Henry Trachtenberg for the Manitoba Historical Society, "was very much concerned with the fate of the arrested foreigners. Protest meetings were held at the Liberty Temple. A Jewish Workers' Committee was formed. It undertook to visit the homes of all Jews to elicit financial support for a Strike Relief Fund. *Dos Yiddishe Vort* mobilized Jewish public opinion: 'Let every Jew support according to his means. Let every Jew remember that three of the arrested foreigners are Jews. And for this reason it is necessary that every Jew help to free the arrested... It is your struggle for justice'. . . ." Posted by Lawrence Bush.

**Manitoba History: The Jewish Community of Winnipeg and the Federal Election of 1935 in Winnipeg North:**

[www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/61/jewishcommunity.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/61/jewishcommunity.shtml)

Mar 21, 2017 - It was also an election of crucial importance for the Winnipeg Jewish .... and was arrested in 1919 as a leader of the Winnipeg General Strike.

**1919 Winnipeg General Strike ~ Canada's Human Rights History**

<https://historyofrights.ca/?s=winnipeg+strike>

The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 led to the creation of several notably abusive federal laws to restrict civil liberties. Section 41 of the Immigration Act, which ...

**You can't take Winnipeg out of the boy - The Globe and Mail**

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/you-cant-take-winnipeg-out-of-the-boy/article769182/>

Aug 8, 2000 - ... the backbone of the world-famous Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 (the ... But the class divisions in Winnipeg's Jewish community, Canada's ...

## VIDEO RESOURCES

### Video

#### **City News: Remembering the Winnipeg General Strike**

<https://winnipeg.citynews.ca/video/2018/06/08/remembering-the-winnipeg-general-strike/>

#### ***The Notorious Mrs. Armstrong***

(documentary film) - Outraged and outrageous, working class mother Helen Armstrong was one of the key organizers of the 1919 strike. Her continued efforts resulted in the Manitoba government instituting the minimum wage act, and give liveable wages to women workers. Available for community license at:

[https://movingimages.ca/store/products.php?notorious\\_mrs\\_armstrong](https://movingimages.ca/store/products.php?notorious_mrs_armstrong)

#### **CBC video: Bloody Saturday: The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919**

–describes one of the pivotal events in Canadian labour history, the Winnipeg General strike of 1919 –

YouTube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1\\_oKcXn8vs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1_oKcXn8vs)

#### **Winnipeg General Strike - YouTube**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVKo6xEqjal>

#### **Why the Winnipeg General Strike Still Matters - YouTube**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwRlrV4ztDA>

## MOVIES

#### ***STAND! the story of the Winnipeg General Strike (2019).***

Being released in cinemas on May 15, 2019 to coincide with the beginning of the Strike. An immigrant Romeo and Juliet battle for love and a better future during a time of social upheaval.

Director: Robert Adetuyi Writers: Danny Schur & Rick Chafe Stars: Marshall Williams, Laura Slade Wiggins, Lisa Bell, Gregg Henry. <http://stand-movie.com>

#### ***Billy Elliot (2000), drama***

A grieving young boy discovers his love of dance in the midst of the 1984-85 coalminers strike, when 142,000 workers were on picket lines throughout Britain.

Director: Stephen Daldry Writer: Lee Hall Stars: Jamie Bell, Julie Walters, Jean Heywood

\*\* Billy Elliot the Musical plays live on theatre stages; i.e. It is playing at the Stratford Festival in Ontario till Nov. 3, 2019. [www.stratfordfestival.ca](http://www.stratfordfestival.ca).

#### ***The Grapes of Wrath (1940), drama, history***

A poor Midwest family, forced off their land, travel to California, suffering the misfortunes of the homeless in the Great Depression.

Director: John Ford Writers: Nunnally Johnson (screen play), John Steinbeck (based on the novel by)

Stars: Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell, John Carradine, Charley Grapewin

***How Green Was My Valley*** (1941), drama

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a Welsh mining village, the Morgans, he stern, she gentle, raise coal-mining sons and hope their youngest will find a better life.

Director: John Ford Writers: Philip Dunne (screen play), Richard Llewellyn (based on the novel by) Stars: Walter Pidgeon, Maureen O'Hara, Anna Lee, Donald Crisp

***Norma Rae*** (1979), drama

A young single mother and textile worker agrees to help unionize her mill despite the problems and dangers involved.

Director: Martin Ritt Writers: Irving Ravetch (screenplay), Harriet Frank Jr. (screenplay) Stars: Sally Field, Beau Bridges, Ron Leibman, Pat Hingle

***Silkwood*** (1983), biography, drama, history

A worker at a plutonium processing plant is purposefully contaminated, psychologically tortured and possibly murdered to prevent her exposing worker safety violations at the plant.

Director: Mike Nichols Writers: Nora Ephron, Alice Arlen. Stars: Meryl Streep, Rurt Russell, Cher, Craig T. Nelson

***Comrades*** (1986), drama, history

The story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, a group of 19<sup>th</sup> century English farm workers who formed one of the first trade unions and started a campaign to receive fair wages.

\*\*\* Several of the Tolpuddle Martyrs immigrated to Ontario, became prominent citizens and helped found churches, including what became Siloam United Church in London.

Director: Bill Douglas Writer: Bill Douglas Stars: Keith Allen, Dave Atkins, Stephen Bateman, Katy Behean

***Roger & Me*** (1989), documentary

Director Michael Moore pursues GM CEO Roger B. Smith to confront him about the harm he did to Flint, Michigan with his massive downsizing.

Director: Michael Moore Writer: Michael Moore Stars: Michael Moore, Roger B. Smith, Rhonda Britton, Fred Ross

***Made in Dagenham*** (2010), biography, comedy, drama

A dramatization of the 1968 strike at the Ford Dagenham (UK) car plant, where female workers walked out in protest against sexual discrimination.

Director: Nigel Cole Writer: William Ivory Stars: Sally Hawkins, Bob Hoskins, Andrea Riseborough, Jaime Winstone

***North Country*** (2005), drama

A fictionalized account of the first major successful sexual harassment case in the United States, *Jenson v. Eveleth Mines*, where a woman who endured a range of abuse while working as a miner filed and won the landmark 1984 lawsuit.

Director: Niki Caro Writers: Michael Seitzman (screenplay), Clara Bingham (book) and Laura Leedy Gansler (book) Stars: Charlize Theron, Jeremy Renner, Frances McDormand, Thomas Curtis

\*\* Most descriptions of movies, above, are from [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com).

## PRINT RESOURCES

### Book Club/Study Group Suggestions

#### **Fox**

Novel by Margaret Sweatman. A deft examination of the 1919 Winnipeg General strike and a startling reminder of the dangers of xenophobia, bigotry, greed and fear. ISBN 9780888015952

#### **1919: A Graphic History of the Winnipeg General Strike**

by The Graphic History Collective and David Lester. One hundred years later, the Winnipeg General Strike remains one of the most significant events in Canadian history. This comic book revisits the strike to introduce new generations to its many lessons, including the power of class struggle and solidarity and the brutal tactics that governments and bosses use to crush workers' movements. ISBN 9781771134200

#### **The Bolshevik's Revenge**

(novel), by Allan Levine. Crime fiction by historian; cynical sleuth Sam Klein looks critically at the 1919 strike, seeing on both sides heroes and villains, traitors and fanatics, ignorance and idealism. ISBN-13: 978-1894283335

#### **Papergirl**

A middle school novel by Melinda McCracken with Penelope Jackson. Ten-year-old Cassie, bright, determined and bored at school, volunteers for the 1919 strike committee as a papergirl, distributing the strike bulletin at the corner of Portage and Main. She soon sees this isn't a lark, but a risky and brave movement that will change her forever. ISBN 9781773631295

#### **"Form Without Power? Wesleyan Influences and the Winnipeg Labour Church",**

Historical Papers, 1994, by Joanne Carlson Brown, Canadian Society of Church History. Unpacks the Methodist roots of the Canadian social gospel movement, with particular references to the Winnipeg strike and the role of the Labour Church. <https://churchhistcan.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/1994-5-brown-article.pdf>

#### **Tolpuddle Martyr: Pioneer Farmer, James Brine in Canada, 1844 – 1902**

(2010), by Don Macintyre. The struggles and successes of one of the Tolpuddle Martyrs who came to Ontario, Canada after being released from British punishment for forming a trade union. ISBN 9780986602306 <https://tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/shop/products/tolpuddle-martyr-pioneer-farmer>

#### **Direct Action Gets the Goods: A Graphic History of Strikes in Canada**

The Graphic History Collective with Althea Balmes, Gord Hill, Orion Keresztesl & David Lester. Looking at the history of Canadian strikes through historic and current art, including one the strike movement's enduring symbols, the Sabo Cat who first appeared with the Knights of Labour. ISBN 9781771134170

### Online Articles Remembering the Winnipeg General Strike

<https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/.../snapshots-in-history-may-15-remembering-t...>

## ***An Offering to the Churches by Unifor Unifaith Community Chapter***

<https://www.cpha.ca/fighting-good-fight-winnipeg-general-strike-1919>  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/winnipeg-general-strike>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winnipeg\\_general\\_strike](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winnipeg_general_strike)  
<https://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP12CH3PA2LE.html>  
<https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/the-1919-winnipeg-general-strike>  
<https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/hist/labour/lab22e.html>  
[www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/11/women1919strike.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/11/women1919strike.shtml)  
[www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/34/thirdforce.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/34/thirdforce.shtml)  
[https://historyofrights.ca/Encyclopaedia/Events\\_and\\_Issues](https://historyofrights.ca/Encyclopaedia/Events_and_Issues)  
<https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/life/faith/social-justice-minister-510067592.html>  
[https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/1919-winnipeg-general-strike-leaders-trials-1.5139102?\\_vfz=medium%3Dsharebar](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/1919-winnipeg-general-strike-leaders-trials-1.5139102?_vfz=medium%3Dsharebar)

### **Labour Heroes, Martyrs and Figures to Research and Remember**

#### **Canadians**

Helen Jury Armstrong, Rev. James Shaver, (J.S.) Woodsworth, Rev. Salem Bland , Rev. William Ivens, Abraham Albert Heaps

#### **Americans**

Eugene Victor Debs

### **MORE ABOUT UNIFAITH**

- Inclusive, safe, supportive and confidential, Unifaith welcomes serving and non-serving United Church of Canada faith workers and their families of all theological views.
- Unifor Unifaith Community Chapter gathers active and retired employees of the United Church of Canada and their families for their mutual benefit. Unifaith is a community chapter of Unifor, Canada's largest private-sector union, with which it shares a commitment to social justice.

#### **We are:**

- Advancing solutions for clergy issues including isolation, pensions, benefits and continuous employment.
- Offering advice and advocacy in the face of bullying or disciplinary procedures.
- Providing skills development and socializing.
- Honouring the United Church's traditional heritage of solidarity with the Labour Movement in Canada and around the world.



**Community Chapter for Faith Workers & Family**

354476 Mill Line, Ingersoll, Ontario N5C 3J5

President@Unifaith.ca • Secretary@Unifaith.ca

519-902-4161 • unifaith.ca

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If you have additional suggestions to add to any of these lists,  
we encourage you to let us know at [secretary@unifaith.ca](mailto:secretary@unifaith.ca).

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