



**Parkdale United Church  
Zoom Book Club**

**Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
at 10:00 am**

# The Children's Blizzard

by Melanie Benjamin

From Amazon:

"The morning of January 12, 1888, was unusually mild, following a punishing cold spell. It was warm enough for the homesteaders of the Dakota Territory to venture out again, and for their children to return to school without their heavy coats—leaving them unprepared when disaster struck. At the hour when most prairie schools were letting out for the day, a terrifying, fast-moving blizzard blew in without warning. Schoolteachers as young as sixteen were suddenly faced with life and death decisions: Keep the children inside, to risk freezing to death when fuel ran out, or send them home, praying they wouldn't get lost in the storm?

Based on actual oral histories of survivors, this gripping novel follows the stories of Raina and Gerda Olsen, two sisters, both schoolteachers — one becomes a hero of the storm and the other finds herself ostracized in the aftermath. It's also the story of Anette Pedersen, a servant girl whose miraculous survival serves as a turning point in her life and touches the heart of Gavin Woodson, a newspaperman seeking redemption. It was Woodson and others like him who wrote the embellished news stories that lured northern European immigrants across the sea to settle a pitiless land. Boosters needed them to settle territories into states, and they didn't care what lies they told these families to get them there — or whose land it originally was.

At its heart, this is a story of courage, of children forced to grow up too soon, tied to the land because of their parents' choices. It is a story of love taking root in the hard prairie ground, and of families being torn asunder by a ferocious storm that is little remembered today — because so many of its victims were immigrants to this country."

**Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82432011683?pwd=SEgwSFFIOTRZODVtSmVuYW1vOXNwdz09>

Meeting ID: 824 3201 1683

Passcode: 284356

If you're not able to join the meeting, you are welcome to send your comments about *The Children's Blizzard* to [sloanelm@shaw.ca](mailto:sloanelm@shaw.ca) before April 8<sup>th</sup> so they can be shared with the group and included in our next Book Club Newsletter.

If you think of themes from the book that you would like to discuss at our meeting, you're welcome to pass those on to Lynn ahead of time.