



A Clear Leading is based on *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*. As a work of fiction, the play contains characters, events, and dialogue which have been created for the purpose of dramatization. For a factual account of John Woolman's life, and to discover the numerous other influences he had on the world read the publications listed below.

* * *

Silent Worship, as seen in this play, has been a vital part of Quaker spirituality since George Fox founded the denomination in the 17th century. Quakers wait in silence for the Spirit of God to speak to their souls. They may rise and speak, if the Spirit leads, but there are times when no one speaks. Woolman lived at a time when it was relatively rare for someone to speak in worship.

* * *

The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman edited by Phillips P. Moulton is considered the authoritative version. **John Woolman: A Nonviolence and Social Change Source Book**, by Sterling Olmsted and Mike Heller is available in the back. Copies of both works may be purchased from www.RichDrama.com/BookStore.

Comments and donations may be sent to:

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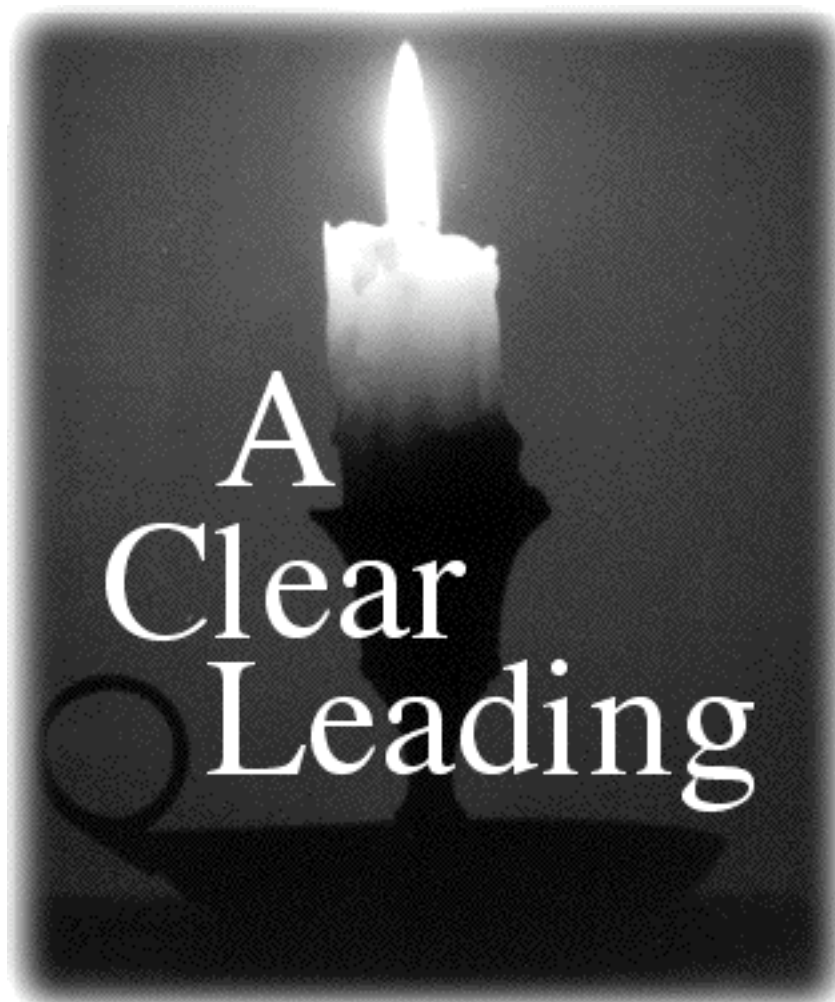
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a one-man play based on **The Journal of John Woolman**



written and performed by
Rich Swingle

A Clear Leading

Cast of Characters
represented by Rich Swingle
(in order of appearance)

John Woolman at 9, 19 and 38

Dolly, a slave at 40, 50 and 69

Mr. Worthington, the owner of Mt. Holly's mercantile at 45,
55 and 74

William and others in the Elkins barn

Amos Elkins, an acquaintance of John's at 20 and 39

Grady, a slave

Benjamin Lay, an abolitionist who has a hunchback

A Slave in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Israel Pemberton, Clerk of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

The play opens in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, which is the governing body for the Religious Society of Friends or Quakers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The year is 1758. There are flashbacks to John Woolman's home town of Mt. Holly, NJ.

After a moment of Quaker silence, the second act begins in John Woolman's boyhood meeting house in Mt. Holly, 1739.

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A Clear Leading was produced originally for the John Woolman Forum at George Fox University, Newberg, OR, October 1994.

A Clear Leading was produced at The Lamb's Showcase Theatre, New York City, July 1997 and January 1999.

* * *

For information on booking any of Rich Swingle's plays go to www.RichDrama.com or call 864-294-9500.

 **Please silence anything invented after 1758.** 

Direction
Dramaturgy
Costume
Properties

Mac Nelson
James Masters, Ph.D.
Heather Jacobs
Kathy Rath, Rich Swingle, Jim Sr. & Fran Warren,
Historic Michie Tavern, Deanna Duff, Kara Parrish,
Kari Shafer,

Artwork

Jim Warren, Kevin Gepford

Special Thanks to Joyce Swingle, James Masters, Mac Nelson, Kimberly Vaughn, Ron Mock, Anita Cirulis, Mary Ellen Chijioke (Swarthmore College Library), Carole Frentrop, Darrell & Linda Kopp, Liz Jennings, Justin Hullinger, Bryan Boyd, Robert DeClaire, Kara Thompson, Steve Prusko, Sean Gaffney, Hiram H. Hilty (author of *By Land and By Sea: Quakers Confront Slavery and Its Aftermath in North Carolina*), Sterling Olmsted, Pauline Peotter, Dr. Jo & Johndy Lewis, Bob Swingle, Shannon Bodie, John Calhoun, Jim & Dustee Hullinger, Brad & Leslie Whitaker, Kathy Gejdel, Kristi Hilgaertner, Dave & Sandy Maurer, Raheem Billips, Patricia McNicholas, Stacy Heit, Peachfield Plantation personnel, Ralph Andersen, New Jersey Department of State/Division of Archives & Records Management, Jack & Carol Waltz of the John Woolman Memorial, The Historical Society Library of Mt. Holly, Alex Andersen, Ky Simpson, Agnes George, Kelly Gough, Corey Getzel, James Rath, Dominick Crincoli, Anne & Jim Jenkins, Jessie Sanchez, Jim & Linda Warren, Jim Sr. & Fran Warren, Stoil Popov, Stacy Beam, Tina Howe, Ellie Ellsworth, Tom Long, Randy Ritz, Douglas Broyles, The Haverford College Special Collections staff, and all the folks at Westchester Chapel & The Lamb's Church.

Greatest thanks to the Lord, who makes all things possible and who deserves all praise.

* * *

John Woolman's efforts made a significant contribution to the abolition of slavery in America and in England, but there are almost **28 million slaves in the world today**. For information on what you can do to become a modern day abolitionist, please contact the following organizations:

American Anti-Slavery Group:

www.iAbolish.org

* * *

Release a child from the bonds of poverty by sponsoring a child through Compassion.

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John Woolman (1720-1772)
by Sterling Olmsted

John Woolman, the subject of this play, was born in Mt. Holly, New Jersey. A recorded minister in the Society of Friends (or Quakers), he travelled widely among Friends from 1742 until his death in York, England, in 1772. He is best known for his *Journal*, which has never been out of print since its publication. Emerson said of the *Journal*, “There is more wisdom in this little book than in any book since the time of the Apostles.”

Woolman is best known for his efforts to persuade his fellow Quakers to give up the practice of slave-holding, but his concerns expanded over time to include many other forms of oppression. For us who are living in a later time, he is significant also for his ideas on economics, education, and what we would call ecology.

In his longest essay, “A Plea for the Poor and Warning to the Rich,” he asked his readers “to consider the connection of things,” and proposed “one common interest from which our own is inseparable—that to turn all we possess into the channel of the universal love becomes the business of our lives.” And in “Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind,” he uses two dialogues between a poor laboring man and two who are richer than he is, to argue against “superfluity,” and dependence on trade, and to urge people to live more simply, and even to employ “weak” laborers and five workers where four were needed before.

Woolman taught school in Mt. Holly for several years, wrote an essay “On Schools,” and produced “A First Book for Children,” which began with the alphabet and ended with the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the essay he wrote, “That divine light which enlightens all men doth appear in children very early,” and argued for small classes, attention to spiritual development, and no emphasis on results. (He wouldn’t have given grades.)

His sense of ecological connections was most remarkable for his time. One quote may suffice. On his visit to Nantucket, he wrote: “I took notice in that small island are a great number of inhabitants, and the soil not very fertile, the timber so gone that for vessels, fences, and firewood they depend chiefly on buying from the main, the cost wherof they depend principally on the whale fishery to answer. I considered that if towns grew larger and lands near navigable waters more clear, timber and wood would require more labour to get it. I understood that the whales being much hunted, and sometimes wounded and not killed, grew more

shy and difficult to come to.”

Woolman practiced what he advocated. He gave up profitable merchandising and earned his living as a farmer and tailor. He dressed plainly, and finally went about in undyed clothes. He took many of his later journeys on foot. He travelled to England steerage, and refused while in England to ride stagecoach, because they moved too fast and injured horses and stage boys. He gave up sugar and silverware. A Friend in England wrote: “John Woolman appears to be of very deep experience of the things of God, and coming up in obedience to the Light of Christ was led out of all superfluity in meat, drink, and apparel, being a pattern of remarkable plainness, humility, and self-denial.

*Sterling Olmsted is Provost and Professor Emeritus of English at Wilmington College, Wilmington, Ohio, where he and his wife Barbara spend part of the year. They split their time between their college and their son in Schenectady, New York. Sterling is a self-professed Woolmaniac. He is Co-author of **John Woolman: A Nonviolence and Social Change Source Book**, available in the back or through the order form on the last page.*

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Quakers continue to be known throughout the world for being ahead of their times on peace and justice issues.

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The following elements of **A Clear Leading** are based on the corresponding pages in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, available at RichDrama.com/BookStore.

John speaks in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends..	92-93
The robins.....	24-25
Revelation.....	23
Frivolous friends.....	25-30
John hired as apprentice.....	29
John’s dream of the tree.....	24
A slave stays in John’s room.....	30
John writes a bill of sale.....	32-33
Certain Evidence of Divine Truth.....	58
John’s dream of the monster.....	161
John refuses to write a will.....	51