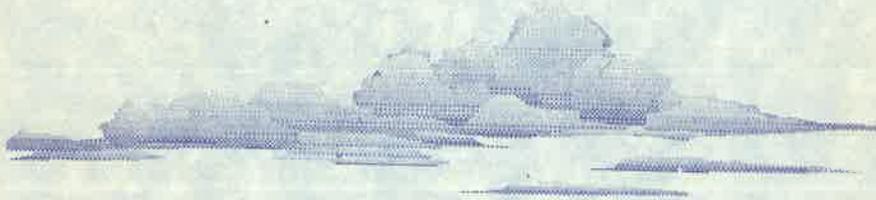


# I FEEL THE WINDS OF GOD TODAY

Leadings as Explored by a Woman, Mother, Doctor, Quaker



Jerilynn C. Prior

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## I FEEL THE WINDS OF GOD TODAY

Leadings as Explored by a Woman, Mother, Doctor, Quaker



Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture  
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**Dedication:** To Joyce and Norman Smith (my parents) whose lives are living expressions of the Spirit of God.

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Argenta Friends Press

## Transforming, Enabling or Unifying Power

The world will never be the same because some were led  
because of John Woolman's stand against slavery  
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## Introduction

Most of us believe that, in the olden days, people were led by God or their faith to do various important and holy things. But how many of us think that we, today, are doing spirit-led things? If they and we are not being led by the Spirit, now, in the world of the 1990's, what are we doing? Should we be "led-ones"? Or is that stuff for the old and for long ago?

The purpose of my sharing with you is to explore what it means in our lives today to "have a leading" or to "follow the Spirit." This process of making our lives a living expression of our faith (as I wrote in a Statement of Claim about conscientious objection to taxes) is not one that is comfortable for many of us. It is intrinsically different from the planning and evaluation processes we undertake in our various occupations. Leadings speak in a different language and apply to often-unknown time frames. Does that mean we abandon our short-range objectives and 5-year plans?. Of course not. However, sometimes our very carefully constructed proscriptions for the future will be subtly and importantly changed. Does that mean following the spirit is out of date? I don't think so. I believe that Leadings are alive and well in the 1990s. My purpose is to share the concept of spirit-led lives with you through some of my own experiences.

But first, I would not be honest if I didn't confess that I have had serious doubts about my taking on this task. Although I felt honoured by the request when it was first made about a year and a half ago, as the time came closer I felt really angry and put upon. (Especially when I realized in late March that I had to have a text ready for printing by the first of June). This paper and this lecture seemed an intrusion upon the important work I felt called to do!

I complained to Jessi Metter, who has been my Meeting support person in this process. I grumbled that everyone else who has given this annual lecture is retired, not, as I am, heavily committed by my work. Leave this religion stuff for the full-time religious, for those who have time to be saints. I am already working

as hard as I can! I'm trying to be a productive academic in a largely male University, a clinical researcher, teaching and writing in an attempt to revise the negative view of women's reproduction. I'm doing my best as parent of two teenage people, plus as a person struggling to carry forward conscientious objection to military taxation. I protested to Jessi, "The one thing I am clear about is that **I don't feel led to do this.**" In fact, I felt so much turmoil and consternation (as well as guilt that I should react this way) that I \*knew I needed time to examine my own leadings. I began to wonder if the turbulence I felt was part of the process of becoming clear about a leading.

Still, I felt trapped. I felt unworthy. I felt overwhelmed. And then, one early morning (as is common with me now, in my new peri-menopausal self), I was awake and restless. I managed to centre myself and I fell back to sleep. Some time later I woke. I had been dreaming. In my dream, I was at work, conversing with a professor. He is always impeccably-dressed and has, over the 10 years I've known him, lost no opportunity to criticize my work and impede my academic progress. In my dream, however, we were having an earnest conversation. "I've been thinking," he said thoughtfully, "that I don't know anyone who is a truly religious person." I recall saying nothing, taken aback at the course of this conversation. "You know," he paused, "when I think about a person of faith, I keep coming back to you. . . . If I know any person who lives their beliefs, it's you."

When I woke, at first I thought this was crazy! To dream of him and to hear him discuss religion and a life of faith. Then I understood--this was a subconscious affirmation. This confirmation of my attempts to live according to God's will, from such a preposterous source, seemed to be a way of saying I was fit to give the Sunderland P. Gardner lecture.

### **I Feel the Winds of God Today**

What does having "a Leading" mean? For me, my life has been shaped by my parent's commitment to do God's will. My

parents were missionaries and we lived in six different places during my first nine years. At the end of World War II, we moved from northwest, rural Washington state where Dad had been milking cows as essential community service. He had been assigned to that task when he applied for conscientious objector status because he could not participate in war and killing. He then became the interim lay pastor in a small community on the Olympic peninsula and started going to a community college. To finish his undergraduate degree, we moved to a quiet town in the Willamete Valley of Oregon and I started kindergarten. Finally we moved to wealthy Berkeley, California suburbs where Dad got his divinity degree. During two summers we worked at a mountain summer camp for Seattle street kids. We then moved to a tiny, remote fishing village in Alaska and spent summers on a mission boat called The Evangel. Romantic as that sounds, in following God's will, my childhood was disrupted and financially insecure, and, when we moved to Alaska, I became an outsider and a stranger in a foreign culture.

I remember my childhood, however, as a time of great excitement, commitment and adventure. I felt, from my earliest memories, that I was part of an important and God-centred plan. Along with learning Bible verses and the words for hundreds of hymns, I learned to accomplish all manner of necessary tasks, from sharing the dish-doing at age six, to packing 75 to 100 pounds of water from age 9 up, to teaching "vacation Bible school" at age 10, to being the boat deckhand as a teenager. Except for the interminable two week when my brother and I were left in the Baptist orphanage in a village while my parents and baby sister took the first trip on The Evangel, I don't remember feeling hurt or resentment. From the time we moved to Alaska, God's leading took on a practical dimension. So whenever we promised to do something we said, "GW-WP," our code for "God willing, weather permitting." I grew up believing it was natural to be led by God.

I now understand that my parent's somewhat puritanical faith was gently tempered with understanding and valued each person, no matter how despicable her conduct. Although I have made choices that differ from those of my parents, and am led in a different

vocation, the concept still holds--I look for a meaning for what I do in life, I seek a leading. Often, when I am making a difficult decision, I visualize myself being at the living room window of our tiny apartment where the wheezy folding pump organ sat in front of a window facing a back-lit stained-glass chapel window showing Christ with his arms outstretched. My brother, sister, dad and I would gather around and sing as mom pumped and played, "I feel the winds of God today" an Irish traditional melody with words by Jessie Adams (1863-1954) (1):

"Great pilot of my onward way,  
thou wilt not let me drift.  
I feel the winds of God today;  
today my sail I lift."

I recall, as a child, asking no fundamental questions about God's will. As a teenager and adult, however, I needed to re-examine, especially the institutional church. I soon learned that many Baptists were content to let the preacher do God's work. I had to find a faith that guided my everyday life, a religion that took a stand against war. In seeking a belief that gave each person a responsibility to do God's will, I found Quakers. This is how I was led to become a Quaker. I was a medical student in Boston, it was summer, hot and humid and our 4th floor walk-up flat on the edge of the black ghetto was stifling. The U.S. was at war in Southeast Asia. My husband, a divinity school student, had turned in his draft card in protest and thus given up his student exemption to the war and had been classified "1-A delinquent." We were waiting for the FBI to arrest him. Through the anti-war underground we got the message to go to 5 Longfellow Park in Cambridge at 1100 one Sunday. We found ourselves crowded in the upstairs balcony of a large, simple building, shuffling and restless in a big silence. When Meeting for Worship broke, a Friend downstairs announced that the Cambridge Friends Meeting was offering hospitality and support for Eric Rutan, a conscientious deserter from the U.S. Army.

I became a member of the Cambridge Friends Meeting during that next year after a transforming 18 days of worship and fellowship

and waiting with Friends and scruffy peace-niks in support of Eric. There is no night call on psychiatry rotation so I brought my sleeping bag and spent all of my non-work time at The Cambridge Friends Meeting. Despite Eric's eventual arrest from the middle of a meeting, I had seen a unity and a clarity of faith in action that thrilled me.

How did the well-heeled Boston Quakers come to be led to disobey the law and shelter a military deserter during a time of war? How could Quakers be sure that the utterly-convinced Friend around whom they rallied was not a narrow or repressive "true believer" or a megalomaniac? How did they come to unity on supporting a deserter? In order to understand, we need to clarify what we mean by a Leading and review the tests that had been developed earlier in the history of The Religious Society of Friends.

John Woolman, a tailor in the "New World" colony of New Jersey in the mid-1700s, provides, in describing one small incident, what I believe to be the tests of a Leading. Woolman, who, at that time and for most of his life, was struggling to abolish slavery, felt moved to visit Quakers who held slaves and try to persuade them it was wrong. He was troubled however, that if he accepted hospitality from these Friends, he was accepting the benefits of slavery. If, on the other hand, he tried to pay for his visit he might offend those he was trying to teach. While sleeping in a Friend's home he woke at night with a beam of light coming from the ceiling and words from it "filled my inward ear." The words that were twice repeated: "Certain Evidence of Divine Truth" [(2), p 59]. Later Woolman completes the description of that leading:

"Being thus helped to sink down into resignation, I felt a deliverance from that tempest in which I had been sorely exercised, and in calmness of mind went forward, trusting that the Lord . . . would be a counsellor to me in all difficulties, and that by his strength I should be enabled even to leave money with the members of [the] Society where I had entertainment when I found that omitting of it would obstruct that work to which I believed he had called me." [(2), p 60]

This small passage gives us the four elements with which to test a Leading.

#### Table I. Tests of a Leading

1. Consistency with "Certain Evidence of Divine Truth"-- associated with humility
2. Persistency--turmoil and disquiet that won't go away
3. Clarity and calmness
4. Transforming, enabling and unifying power

The **first test** is the most important--one is called to do something that is entirely consistent with fundamental principles of our belief. What we are doing must have "Certain Evidence of Divine Truth." The led person and the Meeting must be clear that the Leading is consistent with the Light. In the presence of revealed truth, we must be, as Woolman describes humble and sinking "into resignation." A Leading that is consistent with the Light is associated with humility. The first test is restated in one of my father's favorite scriptures: "What does the Lord require of thee but to do justice, to love mercy and **to walk humbly** with thy God." [(3) Micah, chapter 6, verse 8]

The **second test** of a leading is that it is associated with an unnerving persistence which Woolman called "that tempest in which I had been sorely exercised." A true Leading does not go away, it disrupts and continues to give turmoil and unrest until it is resolved. The **third test** of a Leading is that it resolves to a feeling of profound clarity and sense of "rightness". Woolman writes that he experienced "calmness of mind." Finally, the **fourth test** of a Leading is that it has a transforming, enabling and unifying power. Woolman "went forward" now able to do what previously he had felt was socially impossible.

#### Consistency with Divine Truth

We, as Quakers, are not prone to set absolutes or to rely on doctrines. My first way of describing this initial and fundamental test

of any Leading was that it had to be consistent with "first principles" of our belief. If I am to try to define for myself the essential aspects of "Divine Truth" I find two: "that of God in each person" and it's corollary that to harm or bring violence against someone else is wrong. It is also self-evident that the led-one must not be obtaining gain from following a Leading. That would be conflict of interest in the most fundamental degree. (Applying this concept indicates that the Crusades were led by self-interest as much as by holy fervor.)

Producing no harm as an aspect of Divine Truth is a troublesome concept because I am quite sure that Woolman made the Southern landowners very uncomfortable. I know that, by pursuing the conscientious objection idea as far as the courts, I made some Quakers uneasy. One could say that this discomfort and lack of ease was "harm" but it may also be an evidence of the turmoil when a person (or a Meeting) is struggling with a Leading. Also, Leadings often do produce disadvantages, hurt or harm to the "led-one" and her family. It was often hard, when my bank accounts were seized because of Peace Tax resistance, to be able to provide Matthew with his usual allowance, snacks and other small but important pleasures of life.

The "resignation of spirit" experienced by Woolman and the necessity to "walk humbly" are different ways of acknowledging the small part that each of us is playing in a much larger pattern. It is peculiar that one can feel profoundly humble and yet incredibly clear and strong. The humility comes from a sense of the greatness of good, of Divine Truth, and one's small glimpse of the awesome potential. Despite that humility, there is no sense of inferiority or insecurity. It is figuratively the same as looking your boss in the eyes and seeing troubled man, of not taking off your hat (in Woolman's time) to the Queen or to the flag, or of daring, today, to call the Prime Minister by his full name.

The certain evidence of Divine Truth I have experienced relates to being a tax-payer who is required by law to contribute to the costs of keeping a standing army, and recently of mounting a Canadian military presence in The Persian Gulf. The fundamental

idea that war is wrong is something I have always believed. I have always felt that non-violent direct action by a humble but truth-filled person was stronger than any weapon. I grew up hearing about Gandhi and Satyagraha (Soul Force). The U. S. was struggling with costs for the Vietnam war and levied a 10% telephone tax in the late 1960's. Because I was on call, we needed a phone. I simply did not pay the 10% tax. And, in 1969, when I finally earned an income as an intern, I struggled with the large portion of the tax that would go for war. I re-wrote my withholding slip to say I had more dependents, and recall risking a criminal charge which could have prevented my ever practising medicine, something for which I had worked desperately for 10 years.

By the age of 26 I was very clear that, just as my husband could not fight in a war, I could not pay for war through my taxes. It seemed a natural extension of the principle of conscientious objection to military participation. And, John Woolman had experienced the same struggle. In his day, Britain was raising taxes in the colonies, some of which would be used to fight the French and the Indians to the West. What troubled Woolman most was that this tax and its relationship to war had not fazed his fellow Quakers! "To refuse the active payment of a tax which our Society generally paid was exceeding disagreeable. . . ." [(2), p 77]. Here he was, trouble-maker as ever, getting upset about a little bit of the levy asked by the beneficent King George. Perhaps he should just "put up and shut up." But, he had a very sensitive conscience that gave him "certain evidence of Divine Truth" so he writes: **"but to do a thing contrary to my conscience appeared yet more dreadful."** [(2), p 77].

For me, deciding to re-direct the military portion of my taxes in Canada took a bit more time. When I first came to Canada in 1976 I had been re-directing the military portion of my U. S. Federal tax to peaceful purposes for six years. Perhaps because my income was small, and I added and subtracted correctly, I had not been punished in the United States for re-directing the military portion of my taxes.

When I first arrived, it seemed to me that Canada was peaceful, that it's military was largely used for United Nations peace-keeping missions and therefore, at first, I wasn't led to be a tax resister here. However, by 1982, I had become single, no longer had my husband's reluctance with which to deal and was aware of U. S. Cruise missiles being tested over northern B. C. and Alberta. The 10% for Canadian military activity felt as odious as the 50% in the U. S. So, I joined Conscience Canada, led by the earnest Friend, Edith Adamson, and redirected the military portion of my income tax to the Peace Trust Fund.

Around the same time, Canada was entrenching a new Charter of Rights and Freedoms (with the short-sighted, tragic omission of Quebec). There was a flurry of activity in Conscience Canada because we were hoping, with the legal assistance of David Vickers and a number of law students, to mount a class action suit on the grounds of the new Constitution's Section 2a granting freedom of conscience and religion. I was ready and willing to be a complainant in that case. However, it never came to fruition because, in Canada, only one citizen can take a government to Court. Also, those people such as David Polster and Edith Adamson who did get called to Tax Court were either treated rudely or had their cases thrown out of court. Before we go on with the story of how I came to be the Canadian to take the Government of Canada to court to allow me freedom of conscience related to paying for military, let's consider the second test of a Leading.

#### **Persistency--holy discontent**

The second test of a Leading is that your concern doesn't go away, it nags, it recurs, it pesters. It is there when you are falling to sleep, when you wake at night, when you are supposed to be doing your usual work. To be so "exercised" and bothered is very uncomfortable. Being holy is certainly not as most of us would like to believe. Not the tidy concept of revealed truth through a gentle healing Light or something dramatic like Moses' experience of a desert shrub suddenly bursting into flame. It is a most inglorious and peculiar experience! I believe that often the turmoil becomes a

low grade stimulus to other experiences and training that are necessary before you will be ready to fulfil your Leading.

Let's return to my re-direction of military taxes in Canada, for the first example of a test of my Leading. Eventually my 1982 return was processed, and Revenue Canada found me delinquent in paying the military portion of my taxes. I remember the turmoil and insecurity I felt. Here I was struggling with a couple of small children, a full-time job and half-time pay as I tried to get a proper academic position in the University of British Columbia, and worst of all, being on call at night and having the potential problem of leaving my children alone or being unable to respond to a medical call. I didn't know of anyone else in the Meeting who felt as I did about taxes and war (recalling Woolman's--"To refuse the active payment of a tax which our Society generally paid was exceeding disagreeable"). I remember calling Edith Adamson, asking for advice. Her experience was that filing a Notice of Objection had been ineffective thus far.

I fussed and worried and couldn't figure out what to do. Part of me was reluctant to offend the government of the new country I was pleased to call home. But I kept feeling like I should complete the Notice of Objection. I had no idea why I was so stubborn as to disregard the clear advice of a Friend with years of experience with conscientious objection to military taxation. All I knew was that the idea I should make a formal, legal protest kept bugging me until I completed the form and mailed it off. After that, I don't recall any sense that what I had just done would later be important.

Another occasion when I became persistently troubled related to whether or not I should have a child. At the time I was a resident in endocrinology in Syracuse. We were continuing to be troubled by the increasing, destructive U. S. war which had now expanded. We went to Washington, D. C. with several other carloads of Quakers and members of the Syracuse Peace Council, demonstrated and were arrested in front of the White House for asking the Quaker President to stop the saturation bombing of Cambodia that was killing one hundred civilians a day. My husband was no longer at risk because his draft resistance had been resolved by a American

Civil Liberties suit against his punitive reclassification, and an identical case had been won in the U. S. Supreme Court. Then, I had no clear idea where I would go with medicine and my husband had decided not to pursue further studies in anthropology. We were five thousand and three thousand miles, respectively from our families. Yet I was increasingly preoccupied with the idea of having a child. I wrote an agonized letter to my mother about the concern I had about bringing a child into such a mixed-up, destructive world. But the idea of having a child, like all Leadings, stayed with me until I (we) accepted it.

A final illustration of the second test for a Leading relates to my professional life. I was initially motivated to be a doctor by a desire to help the disadvantaged, and be of service. My first model in the health field was the public health nurse who came to our village to give all of us inoculations and rid us of lice by washing our hair in kerosene and vinegar. Because of the strong urge to serve, I had taken an internship in Boston City Hospital, the big public hospital for the poor. But I had taken the best internship and that meant specializing in internal medicine and then in endocrinology. This specialty training seemed to be leading me farther and farther from my idea of service and of preventive medicine. So, in 1972, after only one year of endocrinology training, I was troubled about what I should do and didn't feel clear about continuing.

Looking back, it was probably not by chance that, through the Medical Committee for Human Rights (a group through which I acted in situations as diverse as tending to those injured by the police in street demonstrations and checking ghetto children in Boston for lead poisoning) I became a delegate on a three-week medical tour of The Peoples Republic of China. Although I was already four months pregnant, it felt right to go and to see public health in a third world context. However, there was no clear road ahead when I returned. That summer we were unsure what to do and where to go. But I had begun lecturing about my experiences in China and was invited to speak at New York Yearly Meeting. We then met the Headmaster of Oakwood Friends' School and were asked to come, be dorm parents and do some teaching. So we settled in

Poughkeepsie amongst a community of Friends for the birth of our daughter, Rachel. During our two years there I developed and taught a course on Personal Health for the Grade 8 Science curriculum. I also volunteered with the local Heart Chapter, recruited and trained housewives to do blood pressure screening which eventually led to a model volunteer-run clinic for high blood pressure. This provided care for patients with no support other than Medicare who had limited access to health care in Dutchess county.

After two subsequent years as a Public Health Service doctor in the north of Alaska, we moved to Vancouver because I was convinced I could not practice medicine in the United States where it was business first and professional service second. I knew I would not only be broke but would burn out in an attempt to meet an unending need. Not only was there the disruption of moving, but I was only able to get a job as a "teaching fellow." I had a year of self-doubt and depression. If we were going to live in Vancouver, where my husband was going to University, I knew that I wanted to be a faculty member of the medical school, yet I also knew that required further specialization. I seemed to be moving away from my goal of service and work toward disease prevention. I remember one very difficult Sunday when I couldn't sit in Meeting without crying. I slumped in the grass against the Meetinghouse and wept. The only resolution I recall was that I realized I could combine a final year of endocrinology training with being Chief Resident. This would also give me a job that could feed my family (since I wasn't yet certified to practice on the Canadian side of the border).

Not all tests of a Leading end with "deliverance from that tempest" as Woolman experienced. All three of the times of turmoil, self-doubt and persistence of an idea that I have mentioned have had resolutions that were not apparent at the time. Completing my Notice of Objection seemed only to lead to more bureaucratic interventions. Only later would I understand that I was being called to be the Canadian "peacetruster" to carry the first test case of conscientious objection to military taxation to the Supreme Court and the United Nations Committee on Human Rights. Likewise with the decision to have a child. Only later did I become pregnant and I am

still learning the ways my life is enriched and challenged because of Rachel, and later, Matthew. Finally, the anguish about my vocation in medicine was leading to a role in prevention and service that I could not have imagined when I took the tedious step to finish endocrinology and seek an academic position.

#### **Clarity--calmness and deliverance**

The third test of a Leading is that there is sense of resolution of the preceding turmoil leaving you with and a feeling of peace. Once it is clear what you must do, it feels right and you feel centred and secure. There is no need for further choice--you have a full sense of affirmation. For me, that feeling is captured in a memory and in the words of a Psalm: "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me." ((3), Psalm 139: 9-10) My memory is of a glorious wee-early morning in the long days of the Northern summer, I was at the helm of The Evangel, and everyone else was asleep. There was a soft breeze, the hum of the boat, the smell of the newly-wakened air and the far-off buoy toward which I was steering. Everything proclaimed, "God's in his heaven and all's right with the world." (4).

Once the decision had been made to complete a Notice of Objection that first year I was a conscientious objector to military taxes in Canada, I felt right about it. I have made many other decisions since, related to Peace Tax, but the fundamental Leading had been given, and I have been sure.

I also feel a strong, calm affirmation related to my choice to have children. My being able to fill this profoundly productive role of parent gives me a sense of being part of a larger Creative Plan. Never since, have I questioned that initial choice about Rachel although we struggled with the same decision-making about Matthew. But once made, I am clear. My job as a parent is a given. For me, having a child is as personal and positive an affirmation as I can make. As a parent who made a choice to be pregnant, I became the patient, committed nurturer of an unknown new life. Bearing a child, for me, carries the risk and vulnerability and yet the

same personal transformation entailed in a Leading in a more spiritual realm. There was (and is) no way to see ahead to the future for that new life. I had to accept the unknown as positive. I was consumed with a fiercely and utterly protective commitment to the little unknown "Whosits" growing inside of me. I would do every positive thing I could, yet her future was, and is not in my hands.

It is now many years after my step by step Leading toward medicine as a service, and medicine that prevents disease. I am clear now that I have an important job to do. Those whom I try to serve are not necessarily poor or downtrodden but they are viewed as diseased by our culture. Those for whom I am doing research in prevention come from all races and classes and are universally disadvantaged. I am called to learn and teach preventive medicine related to women's reproduction. I started with the persistent, uneasy feeling that to blame loss of a woman's period on physical exercise was doing a disservice, not only to the woman but to physiological truth. In order to learn what changes in the menstrual cycle might occur with exercise, I had to know how variable the menstrual cycle was in sedentary women (5). In the process, I found and began working with two committed nurse clinician colleagues. We then developed a scientific way to analyze basal temperatures, a non-invasive way to document when an egg has been made in a woman's cycle (6). Subsequently we went on to develop a simple diary form for recording the natural changes in the cycle (7) and have taught hundreds of women to appreciate the marvellous changes in their bodies each month.

My efforts in medicine have been thwarted by those who find me threatening, either as a woman or because I have new ideas. However, I am now a tenured Associate Professor and will soon apply for full Professorship. The research we have done indicated that making an egg (ovulating) each month and thus making the hormone progesterone are important in women's health. Regular, ovulatory cycles can decrease the risks for a number of common problems: heavy periods, inability to become pregnant, developing acne, developing cancer of the lining of the uterus, probably developing breast cancer, and osteoporosis (the disease affecting

women more than men in which bones become fragile and break) (5,8). No matter how discouraged, overloaded and frustrated I may become in obtaining funding for, doing this research and in getting research results published and accepted, I always have a fundamental sense of clarity and affirmation.

I am clear that step by step, from my remote childhood in Alaska, to Boston City Hospital, to China, to the blood pressure project and teaching in Poughkeepsie, to Barrow, Alaska, to my present very specialized role in the University, in research and teaching women's reproductive health I am playing a part in an important "plan."

These last illustrations imply that Leadings rarely come as shafts of light. Most of the steps in a Leading are small and dimly-lit. But when following a Leading, there is a fundamental sense that the day-to-day frustrations are incidental and irrelevant. A sense of purpose is preserved. However, I think that a Leading that does not resolve to a sense of fundamental affirmation is a Leading that must be reassessed. Then it is time to go to a Committee of Care for listening and guidance. Search about, or simply wait. You are either not ready to act, you are choosing the wrong path or you just think you are being led.

Let me give an example of a time when I was not acting out of a Leading. Out of stubbornness, when the Supreme Court had twice refused to hear our case, and I knew that seizure of my accounts was imminent, I decided to try to prevent the seizure in any legal and straightforward way I could. In retrospect, it was a way of dealing with the intense frustration that a test case for the Charter of Rights was not even allowed a hearing. I gave away as much money as I could to all the causes (for which I already had envelopes!), in amounts of \$250.00 or less since the Revenue Canada agent threatened suit against those to whom I donated. I managed to get my personal accounts to zero, after pre-paying all the bills I could anticipate and taking out some money in traveller's cheques to tide us over. However, in my press of work, I didn't get to the bank the day my salary cheque was deposited, and a medical

plan payment had just come into my office account when Revenue Canada seized.

It was then an urgent practical (as well as conscientious?) matter to keep my next salary cheque from being seized since the action at my bank was in effect for 90 days. I was afraid they would garnishee my wages so I began again a negotiating effort I had previously begun (when the Supreme Court first refused the case). I got a letter of support from the Faculty Association to the chief financial officer at the university. I then called him and got his promise to review the situation with the legal advisors to the University. Then I got a very black and white rejection letter written by the lawyer stating the University's legal obligation to cooperate with Revenue Canada. However, eventually the University administrator called Thomas Berger, our counsel, and my Revenue Canada agent and exacted a promise that Revenue Canada not send a garnishee order until the United Nations Human Rights Committee had ruled.

I can now see that all of these negotiations were done in frustration and not with a sense of peace. I believe now that I was off on a tangent. I didn't really listen to those on my committee of care or to Ursula Franklin all of whom hinted that, since I couldn't really stop Revenue Canada from seizing, I was not disobeying my conscience if I let them. However, out of my stubborn turmoil I reached a new understanding--I could offer to work in non-military, government service for the number of hours equivalent to what I allegedly owed. This is literally alternate service in lieu of military taxation. Unfortunately my requests for alternate service were twice refused by the Minister of National Revenue.

In summary, a true Leading carries with it a sense of clarity, the barely perceptible early morning breeze. If that central feeling of peace is not present, keep searching. . . .

### Transforming, Enabling or Unifying Power

The final test of a Leading is that something changes. The change may be as clear as, "today my sail I lift" or as a staid Monthly Meeting becoming ready to shelter an earnest, scruffy military deserter. Often, however, the transforming power that is at work is as subtle as the day-by-day earlier rising of the sun in spring. Years later historians could look back and see the ways in which the crazy Quaker tailor who visited all over the South had laid the foundation for the eventual abolition of slavery in the United States. We can take some pride in knowing that the Quaker, Emily Stowe, who was the first Canadian woman physician, played a major part in achieving women's right to vote. Because Woolman and Stowe were led, the world will never be the same.

Sometimes a Leading is an **internal** change. I experienced such a change during Meeting in Syracuse the Sunday after I was released from the Washington D. C. jail and my husband was still being held. I suddenly understood that Richard Nixon was a troubled and weak man rather than a vindictive megalomaniac. Often the change is subtle--from being unable to think about this lecture without frustration and unworthiness, to being ready to write.

The early Quakers refer to a Leading as unifying. This is one aspect of the concept of the transforming and enabling power of a Leading that troubles me. I see that the results of my research bothers and upsets my colleagues rather than bringing us both to a shared perspective. The issue of conscientious objection to military taxation has not, so far, been unifying for Canadian Yearly Meeting. Some earnest Friends are deeply troubled by the idea of breaking the law (rather, the letter of the Income Tax Act). A few are upset at the idea of testing a religious concept in court. Many more thoughtful Friends simply do not feel led to this position. As a Yearly Meeting we continue to withhold taxes from the incomes of our employees, even those who are requesting that they be allowed to practice conscientious objection to military taxation. So the "peace tax" issue is currently dividing rather than unifying us.

I continue to trust the Leading about military taxation will create unity. There is the support of the example set by other Canadian Friends, one of whom worked without pay during the Gulf War rather than have part of her salary used to support it, others of whom will soon be subject to seizure. The process of reaching unity in a Meeting for Worship for Business is often tense, tedious and frustrating. But, the result of our efforts is an amazing change in everyone present. An enabling and transforming change that is a test of a Leading. After all, it is not up to us to set the timetable!

The only way that I can understand who I am and what my life is about is to consider myself a "led-one". I have not often experienced dramatic Leadings, never has a beam of light spoken to me, yet I have a quiet sense of being led. The clarity I feel relates to a profound sense of looking for and finding evidences of "divine truth" in my life. I am not clear because I can see what lies ahead.

I am very sure I have missed Leadings. I hope I will be ready with the next tide, or for the next "freshening breeze." To be ready is to live life as a continuous prayer. The following verse came to me one rainy fall morning as I was rushing to drop Matthew off at the Day Care before I would be late for some urgent something. I felt oppressed and overwhelmed and useless. I stopped under some big dripping chestnut trees, wiping the tears from my eyes. I then had words for what I felt:

Lord, walk with me today  
Be in my thoughts and what I say.  
Speak from "that of God" in me  
To "that of God" in those I see.

I then had the strength as well as the perspective to barge into my busy day.

One day, again, I will "feel the winds of God" and with humility and clarity I trust I will be ready to do what I am next led to do.

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## About the Author

Jerilynn C. Prior is a diplomate in endocrinology/metabolism and an Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. The 84 medical publications which she has authored or co-authored reflect her commitment to clinical research and patient-centered study. Clinical appointments since 1974 have spanned native health, diabetes, gender dysphoria, and osteoporosis. Research efforts in recent years are in the areas of reproduction physiology, and in particular the relationships between bone growth/loss, hormones, exercise, nutrition and genetics. Together with her research team, she has developed non-invasive methods of tracking internal hormonal variations. In 1990 The New England Journal of Medicine (v.323) published her study "Spinal Bone Loss and Ovulatory Disturbances". In her clinical practice and as research scientist she is strongly committed to increasing women's knowledge of their own bodies so as to empower them to maintain their health and to be active partners in their medical care. She is a founding member of Physicians for Social Responsibility in British Columbia.

Those who worship with Jerilynn understand that she has a fearlessness born of deep conviction, a seemingly bottomless well of energy, and a deep feeling for the human condition, particularly for that suffering which results from injustice. In Meeting for Worship, her vocal ministry is sometimes expressed through song, a life-long expression of her spirituality, which has been nurtured through her participation in the Vancouver Bach Choir. Her children Rachel and Matthew are also choir members. She has served as the Clerk of the Refugee Committee and as a member of Ministry & Counsel for Vancouver Monthly Meeting. Jerilynn's peace work spans three decades. She is well-known for her conscientious objection to military taxation and her struggle to do alternate

service for peace. In 1987 Jerilynn was the recipient of the Muriel Duckworth Award presented to a woman who is a feminist and who has contributed significantly to the advancement of women in Canada through her action-research in the field of social justice, including peace. Quaker first principles such as "seeking that of God in everyone" suffuse Jerilynn's life and take on the practical outlook that in all human affairs common ground can be found, and that we can expect to call upon the best in ourselves and others in all endeavours.

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This is the thirty-eighth in a series of pamphlets on subjects of interest to Canadian Friends. If you have a manuscript of interest to Canadian Friends please write:

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In I Feel the Winds of God, Jerilynn C. Prior explores the common threads of her life to illustrate her sense that God has always been near. Her childhood affirmation: God-willing, Weather-permitting, has matured to a quiet knowing that in all aspects of life, from the private personal decision to have children, to the most public statement of conscience and belief before national and international tribunals, God's plan for us can be revealed.

To better understand the concepts of a leading, Jerilynn Prior searches the eighteenth century writings of John Woolman. In his mystical experience of "Certain Evidence of Divine Truth" she finds four tests of discernment. These are: a leading must be *consistent* with the most basic tenets of our faith; a leading to act *persistently* asserts itself until we reach acceptance; third, we arrive at a state of *clear, calm affirmation*; and last, as individuals and in communities small and large, we are *transformed and unified* to do what previously we felt was impossible. Jerilynn's personal leading to be a conscientious objector to military taxation, and her struggle to pay taxes for peace or to do alternate peaceful service has yet to be recognized by our country's judiciary or its lawmakers. Too, as a religious community, Quakers have yet to reach unity in this matter. Still she trusts that this basic life-affirming belief will find its place in our world in God's time.

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