



**Patricia
Burdette**

Cover: Hair stylist
Nakara Fields (left)
and hair styl-
ist/co-owner Kristy
Fields-Hunt at
Klashique's Beauty
Shop (see story
page 4).

Photo by Cyneatha
Millsaps

Kitchen table theology

From my earliest memories, my faith in God has been central to my worldview, even though our family did not attend church when I was growing up. It was difficult then, and is now, for me to have meaningful conversations with others without bringing my faith into the discussion.

Often students at Ohio State would seek me out in my private office to ask, "What are you, some kind of Christian?" or, "What kind of Christian are you, anyway?" As I spoke openly in my office in response to their questions—in a transparent way impossible to do within the classroom setting—I did not realize there was a name for this kind of informal sharing: Kitchen Table Theology. It is most common among women, therefore, it is mainly female theologians who write about it and give it a place among other approaches to the study of God and our relationships with God and others. Somehow, it made me feel more competent to know that this informal sharing was "officially" recognized in theological circles.

At least one of my students, now married and a mother of three, still continues these discussions with me in cyberspace: she and her family now attend a Mennonite Church in Texas. This gives me encouragement to continue my kitchen table theology, whether it is actually around a kitchen table or around a desk in an office, around an airplane tray table, across a counter, or wherever I find myself engaged in conversations with others. We never know where these informal conversations will lead, do we?

In this issue of *timbrel*, Cyneatha Millsaps writes about kitchen table theology happening in a beauty shop, while Mary Nietzsche talks about it around an actual kitchen table. In her Bible study, Vickie Shurelds explains how her childhood hair-doing sessions were made interesting and educational as her mother and friends discussed problems and faith, oblivious to Vickie's intently listening ears. As you read this issue of *timbrel*, I hope you will consider the ways you have engaged in kitchen table theology, with or without the kitchen table.

Sister Question for Sept.–Oct.

In preparation for the next issue of *timbrel* which will focus on "Women and Poverty," consider: **Two-thirds of the people living in poverty worldwide are women, often women with children. How do you think this high level of poverty among women is a cause or an effect of other problems you see?** Send answers to <PattyB@Mennonite-WomenUSA.org>. 