

## Women's Prophetic Voice



**Patricia  
Burdette**

**Cover: A spontaneous prayer circle emerged from a conversation circle at the 2008 Women in Conversation Retreat at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa.**

**Photo by Nora  
Wolhuis**

I remember the first Thanksgiving my husband and I spent without any of our children around. I anticipated being lonely, but he surprised me with a romantic week-end trip to the Allegheny Mountains. Somehow a change of scenery, a romantic surprise, and remembering why I fell in love with this man kept me from being lonely at all. But there are times when I feel lonely, even in the churches where he has been pastor.

The topic for this issue of *timbrel* is "Loneliness in Community;" some might say that is an oxymoron. Yet, many women, younger and older, report experiencing feeling lonely while being a part of a faith community. How can this be? It occurs for a variety of reasons, but one underlying reason nearly always is fear. Fear of being unwanted, unappreciated, unloved. We have nearly all experienced these feelings at one time or another. Brittany McGraw writes about experiencing these feelings and being fearful of reaching out to others, then taking that risk. Meghan Good writes about her experience feeling lonely in a faith community until someone else took a risk to reach out to her.

Reaching out to connect with others is the way we build community and combat loneliness. Sometimes this requires us to listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and act on that prompting. Sometimes it means treating another person the way we wish to be treated. It can often require us to move out of our comfort zone, take a risk, or accept someone who has different values from our own. It nearly always means looking for common ground with another human being, which may sound easy, but often is not. Accepting someone without judgment who has values different from our own can stretch us, but it always means building a connection that strengthens community and dispels loneliness.

Kirsten Klassen writes about non-judgmental acceptance in her column "Home, Hearth, and Health" as a way to build connections with others. Heidi Martin, in her column "Stirrings" writes about the three truths of loneliness as she reviews two movies. She, too, indicates that reaching out to others, building friendships, is an antidote to loneliness.

The scriptures instruct us to live kingdom values in the here and now. This means risk. This means building community with all of God's children.

### Sister Question for January–February

In preparation for the next issue of *timbrel*, which will focus on "Honoring Our Mothers," consider: **What have you done to honor your mother, or how have your children honored you?** Send your response to <PattyB@MennoniteWomenUSA.org>. 