

Questions & Answers with Beckie Weinheimer about *Converting Kate*

Q: How did you come up with the idea for this book?

A: My husband and I like to take trips to coastal Maine. One day we went to a church service in a small church like the one I describe in Maine. This was the first time I had attended anything but the conservative church I grew up in. I was touched by the liberal ideas of inclusion the minister spoke of. I was beginning to question my own church at this time. The next day we went back to see the church when it was empty. The sun shining through the stained glass windows, the musty smell that reminded me of my childhood reunions at a cabin in the mountains, the setting by the ocean in the pine trees all filled me with such emotion. I told my husband, I have to write a book about this building. And so I did.

Q: Is this story based on your own life?

A: No. Kate is totally fictional. But I had similar emotional feelings after my twelve year old daughter died. I thought I could imagine how it felt to lose a father and break away from a religion that was deeply entrenched in your family heritage, because I had just done that.

Q: Do you write every day?

A: I write when no one is in my house. That means I write Monday through Friday. If someone is in the house, I can't seem to escape to that lovely place where the magic happens.

Q: Did you have an outline or know how the story was going to progress?

A: No. I would sit down every morning and then my fingers would start moving on the keys and seriously, Kate would just do things. Not always things I wanted her to do. It seemed she had a life of her own beyond me and as long as I listened to her voice in my head, the story progressed and I was as surprised as anyone about what would happen next.

Q: Do you belong to a critique group?

A: Not in a traditional way. But I have a few good friends, my daughters and my husband who read my drafts. I trust them and they know what I am trying to say even when I don't say it. My girls are especially good at telling me when I have over done it. Mom! Argh! Blah. Are some of the fun things they write to me in the margins. I couldn't do it alone. I don't know how any writer can. I need feedback. But only from people who know me and who I trust.

Q: Have you written other books?

A: Yes, I have one that I have just completed that is for middle grade readers. I have a picture book that will come out next summer and I have a three book time travel series that I am very excited to get started writing. I spent a month in Wales a year ago doing research for this series. It is light and hopefully will be funny and as my other books have dealt with serious subjects I am ready to just play and have fun.