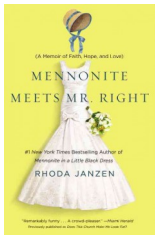


Does This Church Make Me Look Fat?



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Rhoda Janzen has a gift for describing an ordinary life in ways that make it seem extraordinary. Humor is key as in this chapter opener, "How do you tell your PhD friends, far-flung across the world at their various academic postings, that you are attending church *on purpose*?" And it's not just any church that this feisty ex-Mennonite has joined, but a Pentecostal one.

In *Does This Church Make Me Look Fat?* Janzen has interwoven two other threads: how she met and married a man very different from herself, and how she dealt with a diagnosis of breast cancer.

The man she chose to marry is a conservative, evangelical and a hunter--all things that Janzen never expected to find in a mate. Not only does she leave her lovely lake-front cottage for him, but she moves into a dark, dreary house where his curmudgeonly aged father also lives. Her unhappy father-in-law rebuffs most of her attempts at good cheer. But luckily, she hits it off much better with his teenage son and they become fast friends. In fact, she helps him endure a hard break-up with his long-standing girlfriend (even though that entails gallons of new paint to cover up her name on his bedroom walls).

Janzen's cancer diagnosis is extremely serious. Her doctors and her family expect her to die because the cancer is growing fast and is also very large. In fact, Janzen starts giving away her favorite possessions--shoes and works of art.

But it's the new church that is the heart of this story. Rhoda has many problems with its expectations and treatment of women, ones she shares with her husband. But she decides to give it a try, and this new faith balances her in a way that she has not experienced since childhood when her Mennonite faith was at the core of her being.

One interesting component of the book is Rhoda's response to tithing her income for the church. Doing so, helps her and her husband to live more simply and buy less, but amazingly, their income seems to grow magically with each increase in their giving.

As a college professor and intellectual, Janzen has a unique perspective on both her new church and her new family. In this book you will experience a delightful woman's discoveries about illness and faith. For another writer's perspectives on religion, try Anne Lamott's *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* ..

Posted by Dory L. on October 22, 2012

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