



My Almost Certainly Real Imaginary Jesus

A Memoir by

Kelly Barth

Heartbreakingly honest and hilarious, *My Almost Certainly Real Imaginary Jesus* shows just how easy it can be for a young homosexual to fall headlong into fundamentalism, venturing into the very heart of enemy territory and the church's false promises of altar calls and sexual cures. In the spirit of Anne Lamott's *Traveling Mercies*, this debut memoir is plainspoken, speaking with candor and insight. Barth particularly addresses the disconnect between the radical and very human Jesus of history and the church's supernatural savior. She asks the question to *all* in the closet—both closet Christians and closet homosexuals: **Which is more difficult, admitting to being Christian or admitting to being gay?**

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Biographical note:

Kelly Barth was a fiction fellow in the University of Montana's creative writing program and has received fellowships from the Missouri Arts Council and the Kansas Arts Commission. Her work has been published in anthologies and literary journals, most recently *Coal City Review* and *Muse & Stone*. She lives in a very small house with her partner Lisa Grossman in Lawrence, Kansas. *My Almost Certainly Real Imaginary Jesus* is her first book.

Praise for *My Almost Certainly Real Imaginary Jesus*:

"Barth's tale of growing up gay in the heart of Missouri's Bible Belt is one of the funniest and most endearing accounts of spiritual growth in the genre. This well-written book also manages to offer a fascinating anthropological account of spiritual life in the rural Midwest."

—Susan DeGrane, *Booklist* (starred review)

"This charming memoir, Barth's first book, is an exemplary coming-out story as well as a wholesale indictment of the hypocrisy and false promises of many archconservative Christian congregations about sexuality—that love, when it happens between two members of the same sex, is a manifestation of broken 'machinery in need of parts and service.' Barth's recovery from self-loathing and anxiety is a very near thing, but this witty volume leaves her happily partnered and churched. VERDICT: A lovely volume for readers who can't get enough Anne Lamott or Mary Karr, Barth's book is both revelatory and amusing."

—*Library Journal*



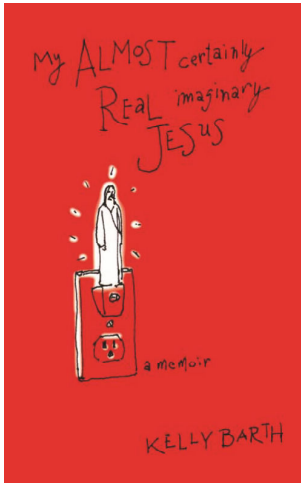
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More Praise for *My Almost Certainly Real Imaginary Jesus*:



“Barth recalls her youth and young adulthood with vivid detail and imagery. Though much of the book centers on her faith or life amid various faith traditions, she also weaves detailed stories about her relationships with others, including the woman she would go on to marry.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Unflinching and funny, the book concerns itself with the seeming impossibility of coming out gay in an extreme Christian milieu and, at the same time, coming out Christian in an increasingly secular era. Barth picks her tongue-in-cheek moments, saving them for her most absurd anecdotes... But this isn’t just a droll coming-out story; it’s a serious expose of organized intolerance, which explores antagonism and social issues of dignity.”

—*The Missoula Independent*

“... an eye-opening read for anyone interested in reconciling faith and homosexuality, which is poised to be a prominent election issue. One hopes that it might also help others who have struggled with sexual identity and faith find their way to a place of spiritual acceptance and love.”

—*The Kansas City Star*

“... funny, beautiful, poignant and heartbreaking. Barth says she faced many fears and demons in the effort to get it written. ‘It’s told straight from my own perspective,’ she says. ‘Let the chips fall where they may.’”

—*The Lawrence Journal-World*

“Funny. Poignant. Heartbreaking. Barth takes us through a world of religious dogma that can be harsh and frightening and emerges into a Christian spirituality we recognize—one of love and tolerance and wisdom. Her nuanced story will be exotic to those of us who have never personally experienced evangelical religion, even as its central humanity remains deeply familiar.”

—Sharman Apt Russell, author of *Standing in the Light: My Life as a Pantheist*

“Kelly Barth’s heartfelt, funny and wrenching book is testimony to Jesus’ steadfast love. Her faith, tested and tried, looks beyond the failings of religion to claim that love for all.”

—Sara Miles, author of *Take This Bread* and *Jesus Freak*

“*My Almost Certainly Real Imaginary Jesus* is a beautiful memoir of a young Christian woman’s determined but hopeless battle with her sexuality, and Barth’s narration is wise, honest, and frequently hilarious. Her struggle and triumph, so engagingly rendered, should resonate with anyone who has taken the long way to thoughtful self-reliance.”

—Laura Moriarty, author of *The Rest of Her Life* and *The Center of Everything*

“As more states permit same-sex unions and marriages, American faith communities will continue to scrutinize and reexamine their positions. Barth’s frank, funny, and touching memoir of her struggle for self-acceptance as a lesbian from a conservative background may give readers the personal angle they need to make sense of the issues.”

—*Library Journal*

