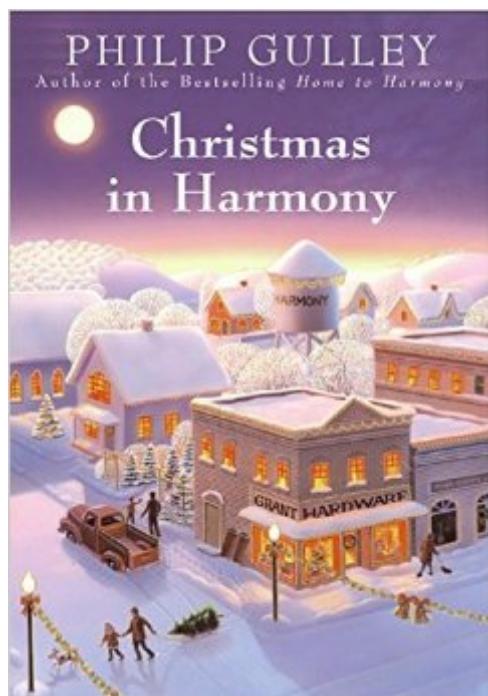


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Christmas In Harmony (A Harmony Novel)



Synopsis

Philip Gulley takes us to Harmony, Indiana, at Christmastime as inspiration strikes the inimitable Dale Hinshaw. Always looking for a way to increase the church's profit margins, Hinshaw brainstorms a progressive nativity scene that will involve the whole town, complete with a map like those for the Hollywood stars. Neither Pastor Sam Gardner nor the other members of the Harmony Friends meeting express any enthusiasm for this idea, but Dale is unstoppable. Meanwhile, Pastor Sam has his own concerns: he's having his annual argument with his wife, and he's worried that the four-slotted toaster he bought for her may be too lavish a gift. Amidst the bustle of the season, the citizens of Harmony experience the simple joys and sometime loneliness that often go unseen. Sam comes to the realization that Dale, in his own misguided way, is only trying to draw meaning from the eternal story of Christmas. "In this unsettled world, it is good to have this steadiness -- the Christmas Eve service, the peal of the bell. . . . There is a holiness to memory, a sense of God's presence in these mangers of the mind. Which might explain why it is that the occasions that change the least are often the very occasions that change us the most."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Philip Gulley won me over with his first Harmony book, "Home to Harmony." His character development and wonderful sense of humor bring the people in his books alive. I was quite surprised when I found that this book was only 84 pages long! But that is good for a Christmas

book, as you can read it in one sitting. Anyone who has been a member of a church can find someone to identify with or knows someone in their church like Dale Hinshaw! I laughed out loud more than once, but the best part of the book was the ending.....very heartwarming, touching and made a tear roll down my cheek.

Just finished reading this book in one sitting. The flow and writing were easy to follow, taking the reader from one emotion to the other - the simpler ways of life, the five and dime, Santa, family gatherings. The best part of the book was the part where "Sam" read the Christmas story to "Frank". Thus going back to the original tradition that the church has observed for years. Let's not forget about Dale Hinshaw, every small town has someone like him. A likeable character although somewhat misguided. Philip Gulley makes him to appear almost humanlike, along with the other characters in his book. Once you read one of his books, you can't wait until the next one is published. Although only a layman on book reviews, I give this book an extremely high rating. It is rare that a book touches me enough to laugh and cry at the same time. It is an excellent Christmas gift to give anyone - young or old.

, bookstores, and readers on this site often compare the Harmony series to the Mitford series by Jan Karon. I think the comparison is misguided. Certainly there are obvious similarities; but Gulley's stories have a crucial difference. Mitford, while idealized, is supposed to be a plausibly realistic place, with realistic people. Gulley, on the other hand, cannot keep himself from lapsing constantly into hyperbole for comic effect (sort of like Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon stories). This becomes apparent in just the first few pages of this book: Would a local beauty queen, asked to dress in a bathrobe to portray Mary in a Christmas pageant, really wear a revealing negligee? And would the church allow the pageant to proceed if she did? Would a church board member seriously propose that the church obtain W-2s of prospective members to evaluate their potential financial contributions? In both cases, of course not. Don't get me wrong -- I agree with other reviewers that the book is funny. It's just a different kind of book from Karon's; hers are gentle humor within a realistic framework, while Gulley's emphasize humor (sometimes to the point of wackiness) over realism.

After reading "Just Shy of Harmony", where Gulley takes the story into more serious and sometimes borderline sacreligious ground, "Christmas in Harmony" hits the mark readers/fans of "Home to Harmony" would expect. Yes, it's short, but it only covers the few weeks of Christmas preparation

his little parish are to endure. Laugh-out-loud funny in places and reflective in others, Gulley has another winner in this little gem. Enjoy!

and this book is a great read for the holidays. A nice, short easy Christmas story, but still the same warm, wonderful small town we have grown to love. Being a pastor is a lot of work and tiring as we read in this book. All the parishioners provide lots of laughs and insights. Mr Gulley provides us with a wonderful story, without foul language and a few holiday messages. Pick up this book, you won't be sorry. One of those you will want to read every holiday season thereafter.

I don't have too much to say about this book except that it is hilarious. I read Home Town Tales a couple of years ago, and I have since read all of Mr. Gulley's books except one. I have cracked up over every one of them. I read this one in a day because it kept me laughing so much. I am patiently awaiting another of Mr. Gulley's fabulous books. I am on right now to order a copy for my pastor because I think he would really get a kick out of it.

Philip Gulley's Christmas in Harmony is an amusing tale of Sam Gardner's Christmas season. He is the Quaker minister in Harmony, Indiana, and the church is getting ready for Christmas. Dale Hinshaw, the church's resident creative programmer. He insists that the people of Harmony no longer want the same old Christmas mass, and he decides to organize a Progressive Nativity, without getting anyone's direct agreement, as is usual. Gulley works in elements of some of the downsides of Christmas, such as the mass marketing, when the Nativity scene gets bombarded by different signs from local businesses who won't let Dale use their things without a little free advertising. In fact, the whole nativity turns into a bit of a joke. But, nonetheless, Gulley works into the story many refreshing Christmas thoughts. He is able to make the reader see both sides of Christmas, the mysticism and wonder that a new child feels, and the cynicism and splurging that goes on during the holiday season. As is usual with the Harmony books, he works little thoughts into the end of each chapter, just something to ponder about. This story made me laugh out loud several times. Unfortunately, it was a rather short book, which is why I wouldn't recommend buying it. But if you are able, definitely check it out of the library. It is an amusing Christmas tale that evokes memories of each person's own childhood Christmas, and the wonderful scents, thoughts, gifts, feelings, and overall happiness that Christmas brings about.

All of his books evoke a life so different than the big city I've almost always lived in. Though his

congregation isn't one that meets in full silence and unprogramed as is what most people think of when they think of Quaker, the Quaker spirit is mostly found in the way his flock relates to each other. His homy insights into the way people work and how the heart works is a joy I find in each of his books. I'll add that his nonfiction books are wonderful as well. They are full of the kind of joy and hope you would expect from someone who writes such lovely fiction.

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