



## Philip Gulley

**Christmas in Harmony**  
**ISBN13: 9780060520120**

**Q: How much of the Harmony series is based on your own experiences as a pastor?**

A: They were more typical of the rural churches I pastored when I first began ministering. These churches tended to be ran by a few powerful families with a supporting cast of a few oddballs. Despite their eccentricities, it was usually a joy to be with them. Fortunately, I've never had to pastor a person like Dale Hinshaw, someone who's raised ignorance and intolerance to an art form. I have had my share of Fern Hamptons.

**Q: What is the biggest challenge you've faced as a pastor? As a writer?**

A: I suspect the biggest challenge for most pastors is finding the time for theological and spiritual growth. It's very tempting to retreat to the things we learned in Sunday school and to grow stale in our thinking. Unfortunately, when pastors become stale, so do their congregations. Making time to study and think continues to be a great challenge.

My greatest challenge as a writer is finding time to write. There are so many demands on a writer's time that a writer barely has time to write. People enjoy meeting authors, and authors enjoy meeting the folks who read their books. But travel to booksignings and speeches is time consuming. Finding the balance in all of this has been a bit tricky.

**Q: What is the one thing you'd like people to take away from the Harmony books?**

A: When I began writing, I made it my goal to gladden people's hearts. That hasn't changed.

**Q: What would you do with your life if you were not a writer/pastor?**

A: I would want to be a cabinetmaker and make fine furniture. I love working with wood and making useful things. If it weren't for their prohibition against marriage, I would have enjoyed being a Shaker.

**Q: What was the inspiration for Dale Hinshaw?**

A: Dale is a compilation of every fundamentalist I've ever known. I've made it a point never to have Dale say or do anything I haven't first seen in real life. When people write to tell me they have someone just like Dale in their church, I'm never surprised. Unfortunately, his number is legion.

**Q: You've done both fiction and nonfiction. Do you have a preference for one or the other? If so, why?**

A: It depends on my mood. I continue to write essays for Quaker Life magazine. It's such an enjoyable experience, I'm often tempted to return to that format. But I feel the same way about fiction after spending a day writing about Harmony. I find I can write about things I'm passionate about in both fiction and non-fiction, and that's what matters most to me.

**Q: You've been referred to as "Indiana's Garrison Keillor" and "the next Jan Karon." In your opinion, what makes a great storyteller?**

A: Obviously, you've been speaking with my mother. Since I admire the work of Keillor and Karon, I'm flattered by the comparisons. I think good storytelling holds up a mirror so hearers can learn something about themselves and the human condition. Good storytelling not only entertains, it enlightens. If I can help a reader become a little less like Dale Hinshaw and a little more like Miriam Hodge, I've done a good day's work.

**Q: What are some of the influences in your life that contributed to your success as a storyteller?**

A: As a child and now as a pastor, I spend a great deal of time with older people, many of whom grew up in a storytelling culture. I watch one hour of television a week, so I have time to be with people. I try to listen more than I speak, so I hear a lot of interesting things. Mostly, I've just made it a habit to watch what people do, then write about it.