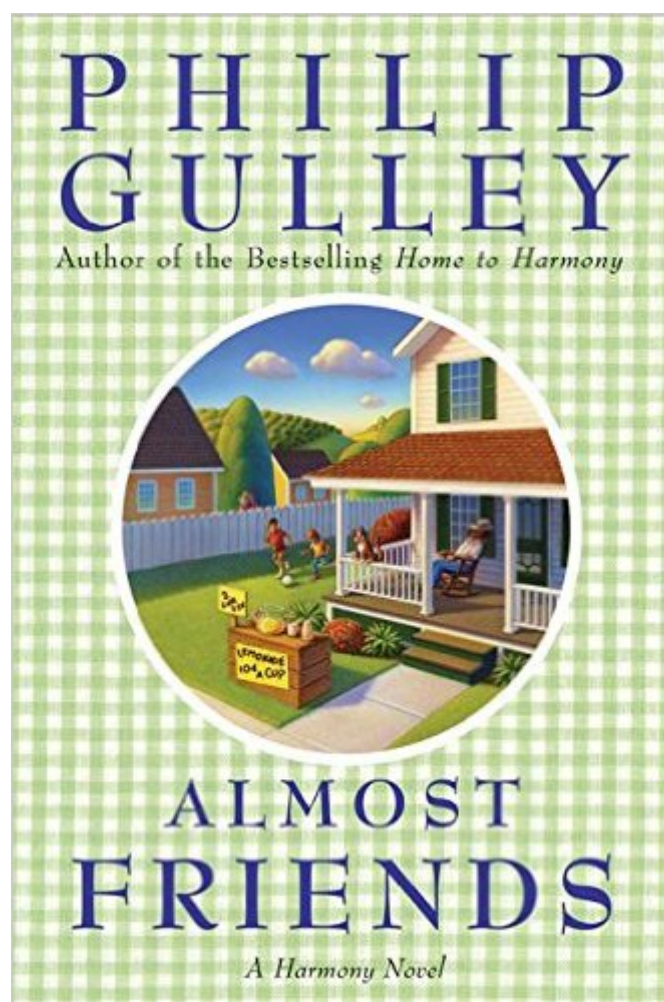


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# Almost Friends: A Harmony Novel



## Synopsis

It's summer in Harmony, but not everything is as sunny as the weather. The good citizens of Harmony are back and stirring up trouble as usual, sometimes with disastrous results. Pastor Sam Gardner must take a leave of absence from his post at Harmony Friends Meeting to take care of his ailing father. But when spunky pastor Krista Riley comes to fill his position, the quirky Quakers seem to fall in love with her, and it begins to look like Sam's sabbatical may be permanent. Krista's resilience is put to the test when Dale Hinshaw and Fern Hampton begin to question whether a woman can faithfully lead their flock, and it looks like the resulting tiff might just be the undoing of Harmony Friends Meeting. Will Sam come to the rescue? Finding the answer to this question makes the trip back to Harmony worth turning every page.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Almost Friends: A Harmony Novel" captured my attention from the first page to the last. I laughed out loud, I contemplated the deep truths presented by Gulley's familiar cast of characters, I met a new friend in "Krista," and I finished this book a better person than when I began. Gulley's gifted writing inspires me to reconsider many long held beliefs in light of a growing faith and realization of God's unconditional love. I've only owned this book for a week and I've already lent it out twice...much to the delight of those to whom I've lent it!

In the next installment of the people of Harmony, Philip Gulley stretches his artistic ability by accurately expressing the doubts and disillusionment Sam Gardner feels as his parishoners stretch him to the breaking point, and as Sam's father is struck with a severe illness. Not as laugh-out-loud funny as some of his other books, *Almost Friends*, with gentle, stirring humor guides the reader through some serious situations, as well as brings its reader to the frustration point as Fern and Dale join forces to not only oust Sam from his position, but also the person, Krista, who takes over in his absence. As usual, Gulley brings to life the characters in his book so that you think you are reading about the neighbor next door ~ as seems what many of these fictional characters have become to those who now anxiously look forward to the goings on in Harmony, and in the lives of Sam and Barbara Gardner.

Friends, I enjoyed the book as I have enjoyed all of the author's books. As a pastor I almost feel a little guilty reading his books. I can put my own names and faces to the characters in the Harmony Friends Meeting. These people inhabit every church in some form. The ideas and the values that the author speaks about both good and bad are so common in our churches and our society at large. I have read comments where people blast the books as being too liberal, but I consider myself a middle of the road person and I cannot object with the author's writings. My guess is that the people who really find the plot lines to be too slanted have been tweaked in some way by the author's writings. A good pastor should know how to do that. As a pastor I began to think about how I would handle an effective and dynamic person filling in at the pulpit for me. For awhile it would be good to have the time off, but then I might well find myself jealous. What is more, sometimes the pastor is uncomfortable taking on elements of the congregation and simply avoids the conflict. I am not mad at the author for pointing out these flaws that most pastors have. Instead I am grateful that the author can write with such honesty. It makes me review my calling and the manner in which I answer it. Once again, I loved the book and look forward to the next one.

While I may not agree with Mr. Gulley's personal opinions, there is no one who can write a book about "Small Town America" like he can. I have tangled with everyone of his characters, through the years, only they have different names. Keep up the good work. I have read every one of his books.

*Almost Friends* offers an insight to a community that many of us may not know still exist in the United States. One that is governed by a church with strict beliefs and policies. Although the author tells an interesting story, I found the plot to be confusing and not what I expected.

I am not Quaker but I do go to church and I am a christian. I have really enjoyed past books by Phillip Gulley and this one is no exception. It is the epitome of a small town and what happens in churches all over the country. I love how there is a female minister in the story and how Dale Hinshaw continues to be a pest! Mr Gulley paints a great picture of his characters and I laugh so hard when I read these books. It reads like Garrison Keelor! I love it! I feel good that I can finally pick up a fictional book that is like eating a good meal very satisfying.

Almost Friends by Phillip Gulley is the next book in the Harmony Friends series. This series has been marked by ups and downs, suffering most when Gulley writes in 3rd person rather than 1st, but it's always been an enjoyable read. I recognize so many people in my church in the stories Gulley tells about his church. The tales of a small town church are heart-warming and laugh out loud funny, but in this installment, Gulley writes with an agenda. When Sam's father suffers a heart attack, he takes a sabbatical from preaching at Harmony Friends. The church hires a young interim pastor, Krista Reily, who inspires with her preaching and even heals the sick! Soon Sam is jealous of Krista's success and wonders about the security of his job. Of course Fern and Dale have to mess everything up. This series does best when telling God's truths through quiet stories of faith in the real world. This story forces the issue of homosexuality into the small town of Harmony, and while that's an issue that many churches are facing today, Gulley portrays it as a black or white issue with the "bad guys" in town on one side and anyone with common sense on the other. That's not how the issue plays out in the real world, and I think that Gulley tries to make the issue too cut and dried in forcing a solution. This isn't an easy issue, and Gulley shouldn't try to make it out to be.

I've read a half dozen of these Harmony novels, and thoroughly enjoy each one. Gulley does a great job fleshing out the delightful archetypal characters in his stories. And this one adds the controversial element of a interim female pastor leading the local Friends/Quaker congregation. This story was relaxing, delightfully fun, and refreshingly honest -- just like other Gulley titles.

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