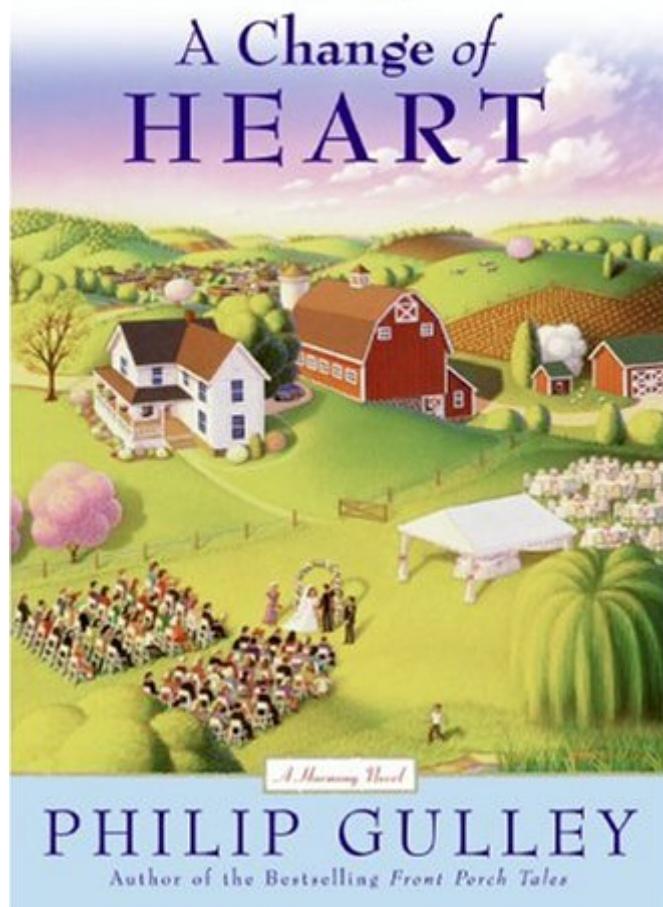


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# A Change Of Heart: A Harmony Novel

"Gulley's work is comparable to Gail Godwin's fiction, Garrison Keillor's storytelling, and Christopher Guest's filmmaking . . . in a league with Jan Karon's *Matilda* series."  
—Publishers Weekly



## **Synopsis**

Sam Gardner never dreamed he would be thanking God for Harmony's self-appointed general of the religious Right, Dale Hinshaw. God does indeed work in mysterious ways. Amanda Hodge, who has been living with her Uncle Ellis and Aunt Miriam since her parents abandoned her years ago, now faces their return and their desire to be a part of her life again. Dale Hinshaw hovers on the brink of death, in dire need of a heart transplant. The whole town is abuzz as the beautiful Deena Morrison marries the town's most eligible bachelor, Dr. Pierce. And in the midst of these triumphs and tragedies, Pastor Sam Gardner helps the people of Harmony negotiate the sometimes rocky road of family life, faith, and forgiveness. Although Harmony's characters develop and grow with each novel, one thing remains constant -- Philip Gulley's ability to capture both the flavor of small-town America and the paradoxical beauty of our own humanity.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Get ready for a readable joy-ride in this installment of the Harmony series, A CHANGE OF HEART. Author Philip Gulley sets the drive on cruise control for his fifth offering --- humorous, low-key

storytelling full of the characters you've come to love throughout the previous four full-length novels. If you haven't picked up other books in the series, put it in "park," stop reading this review now, and go back and begin with *HOME TO HARMONY*. You'll acquire the needed context for the characters and an appreciation for just how much has changed in the little town of Harmony --- and how much remains the same. Already up to speed? For those of you fans who have followed the series, this one opens with Pastor Sam Gardner celebrating five years at Harmony Friends Meeting, which is "about four years and eleven months longer than he'd predicted when he became their pastor." Sam prefers funerals to weddings --- "the guest of honor lay quietly, without a word of protest or advice, not worrying for one moment whether he'd forget the vows or she'd trip on her bridal gown." As always, he has his hands full with his quirky congregation. If you're a small-town churchgoer, you'll quickly recognize the personalities in the Harmony Friends meeting --- only the names will be different. There are some small-town sorts of changes in the air. Dale Hinshaw, the curmudgeonly church member and thorn in the flesh for Sam, is threatening to leave the Quakers for the Baptists. Deena Morrison is getting ready to walk down the aisle with a handsome doctor, and Harmony has its first traffic light. But the more things change in a small town, the more other things stay the same.

Philip Gulley is my favorite author, hands down. His Harmony novels are funny at all the right times and full to overflowing with Christian wisdom and gracious inspiration. "A Change of Heart" is no exception. When I read "A Change of Heart", I devoured each chapter with a sense of eager anticipation as to where Gulley would go with the several stories contained within this one. Later I went back to the book and savored the brilliant writing more slowly. Both times, as with all of Philip Gulley's fine books, I was captured by the consistency of the characters and the truth of the stories therein. Now about "A Change of Heart", I must admit, my dark side cursed dear Sam Gardner when he revived that strangely familiar character, Dale Hinshaw. And then I cursed Dale himself when he left his waitress a creative evangelical "tip" which fit his nature perfectly. I wonder why so many, like Dale, feel they have to be so sneaky about their gospel witnessing? Anyway...the resurrection of Dale in "A Change of Heart" is a tale full of grace and of Sam's honest struggles in dealing with legalism in his midst. This story is a familiar one to me, as I too struggle to love those whom I hold dear...those well-intended souls who, like Dale, are blinded by the all-consuming flame of religious fundamentalism. Another plot that runs through "A Change of Heart" that was even more thought-provoking, was the story of Amanda Hodge. I found myself obsessing as to whether or not her no-good parents were really going to steal her back. I labored, just like the rest of Harmony, to

really believe that her folks had changed. I remember Sam's musing, "I wonder what's harder...to change or to make people believe that you've changed." Good stuff.

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