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Clarion Review ★★★★★ POETRY

Let's Get Together on Earth before Taking Off on the Road To Heaven

Al Hall
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In this book of poetry, Hall's writing is fresh, and he shows no lack of inspiration or enthusiasm.

In *Let's Get Together on Earth before Taking Off on the Road to Heaven*, Al Hall shares his engaging poetry, which covers a diverse range of topics from various perspectives including the humorous, serious, and personal. Whatever the subject, Hall's straightforward and conversational style allows his words to flow easily and to make their intended impact.

Hall says that too many people are so focused on getting to heaven that they do not enjoy the pleasures of living on earth and interacting with other humans or the planet. He offers insight and encouragement to help these people appreciate and relate to the world around them.

As a Baptist deacon, the majority of his poems center around church life and specific people or groups he knows personally. Hall employs a lot of humor to depict events and aspects of the church's activities, such as in his hilarious poem, "Choir Director's Communiqué," written as an exasperated choir director addressing his singers.

> *Why do you think I'm standing in front of you?*
> *All you have to do is sing and watch me.*
> *Some of you are still singing after I cut you off,*
> *And that's something that should not be."*

While Hall can be very entertaining, he can also be tender and uplifting. He writes personal poems about love and commitment for newlyweds and reflective, biographical tributes to honor friends and relatives. Hall includes pieces that focus on local church events (men's ministry activities, welcome to the service, senior citizen meetings, etc.) and biographical sketches of important people in his life. Hall also delves into political commentary and current events, including the shooting death of Trayvon Martin. He writes his thoughts on racial issues, Christmas, loving and serving God, and challenging young people to strive to fulfill their potential. His deep faith, positive attitude, and gifts of encouragement and guidance permeate all of his poems, and his style feels like a favorite uncle sharing the voice of experience with a dear family member.

Hall's poetry collection is conveniently divided into topical sections, but his passion for his church and his love for God and people is solidly unified and unquestionably sincere. This is his fifth book of poetry in his Prelude Collection, but his writing is fresh and shows no signs of lack of inspiration or enthusiasm. In his closing poem, he says, "When I look at the clouds, / I wish they could be the dust from my feet as I fly away to heaven. / I visualize leaving all the cares of this world right here on earth." In the meantime, Hall's poetry will help people enjoy life here before taking off on the road to heaven.

JEFF FRIEND (June 3, 2015)

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