



Looking for Transcendence

Garrison Keillor is the creator of a wonderful excursion into Midwestern small town life. His weekly radio broadcast, *Prairie Home Companion*, offers a visit to the mythical Lake Wobegon. The inside jokes and the characters he creates in his stories are vivid and real to anyone who has grown up in that region.

Beyond *Prairie Home Companion*, Keillor periodically makes keen observations about spiritual life. He recently noted that if you can't go to church and for at least a moment be given transcendence. . .that is, if you can't go to church and briefly move from this life to the next, then why go to church? Keillor observes that just a brief moment of transcendence will cause you to leave that church a changed person.

Much is made of our changing world. Values erode, the biblical foundation of Christianity is questioned, families disintegrate, and the church is required to respond effectively in this new murkiness called the 21st century.

The challenge of training leaders to be effective in this new and emerging world is sturdy. But the real challenge is not "out there," it's inside our own ranks as Christian leaders. We live in a world that Keillor describes as a place where folks are looking for a connection to God—for transcendence. Their search is a journey that takes them to some weird places, yet our world does not lack for spiritual hunger.

Neither does AGTS lack for vibrant emerging leaders. Our recent graduation convinced me once more of the vital role AGTS plays in our fellowship of churches. I shake a lot of hands at graduation. I look into the eyes of people called of God. Some have already shown their excellence as leaders; others are just beginning to serve in leadership roles. But I do not fear for the future when I reflect on what these graduates represent. Their passion leaves me in the dust. Their minds challenge me thoroughly, and their yieldedness to God's call convicts me deeply.

I have no doubt that God is putting together a cadre of vibrant leaders who are ready for the challenge of the 21st century. As president of AGTS, I am faced with huge challenges, but I also enjoy a window into the future that students and graduates of AGTS provide. Regardless of the context in which we find ourselves, the church requires leadership that is passionate about God and rooted in His redemptive cause. AGTS graduates will be leaders who provide the connection that Garrison Keillor says people hope for—leaders that connect people to the redeeming God who can change them eternally.®

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